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VOLUME 22



THE THIRD FORCE
IN
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT

BY

RICHARD H. POPKIN



E.J. BRILL
LEIDEN • NEW YORK • KØBENHAVN • KÖLN
1992

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Popkin, Richard Henry, 1923-

The third force in seventeenth century thought / by Richard H. Popkin.

p. cm.—(Brill's studies in intellectual history, ISSN 0920-8607; v. 22)

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 90-04-09324-9

1. Philosophy, Modern—17th century. I. Title. II. Title: Third force in 17th century thought. III. Title: 3rd force in 17th century thought. IV. Series.

B801.P66 1991

190'.9'032—dc20

91-10145

CIP

ISSN 0920-8607

ISBN 90 04 09324 9

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PRINTED IN THE NETHERLANDS

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INTRODUCTION

The present collection of essays on themes in the history of philosophy has been selected from my writings during the period 1979-1989. It reflects both continuing interest and concern with topics in the history of scepticism, the history of religion and theology, and the history of modern racist theory, as well as the emergence of newer interests in religious concerns involved in the development of 17th- and 18th-century thought, the shift in sceptical thinking from an avowed support of established religion to a covert and overt challenge to the revealed Judeo-Christian tradition, plus the role of certain themes in 17th-century Jewish thought in the making of the modern mind. These essays also show my growing interest and concern with the theological ideas of Newton and with the context of the development and interpretation of Spinoza's ideas.

In 1979 the present expanded edition of my *History of Scepticism* appeared, carrying the story beyond Descartes to Isaac La Peyrère and Baruch Spinoza. The collection of my essays, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism*, was in the process of being published. At that time, I had begun to plunge on to newer themes that I had not dealt with earlier, starting with my paper on "Hobbes and Scepticism I", which was originally presented at the Hobbes Congress at Boulder, Colorado, in 1979 in honor of the three hundredth anniversary of Hobbes's death. In this paper I sought to show how a kind of political solution to the sceptical crisis was offered by Hobbes (at least in one section of his writings). Nine years later, while celebrating Hobbes's four-hundredth birthday, I expanded on this in "Hobbes and Scepticism II".

My paper on "Condorcet, Abolitionist" followed from earlier studies on the history of modern racist and anti-racist ideas. My late co-worker, Leonora Cohen Rosenfield, brought a group of us together at a meeting of the American Society for Eighteenth Century Studies to consider different aspects of Condorcet's thought. (This led to the beginning of a series of *Condorcet Studies* which should encourage more research into this major *philosophe* who has been too much neglected.)

The paper, "Hume's Racism Reconsidered" was written after I had seen some reactions to the papers Harry M. Bracken and I had written on the racist views of the British empiricists. One such reaction was

to claim that there was no logical connection between Hume's racist views and his epistemology, and that his racism was just an unfortunate echo of the views of his time. While I agree (and Bracken does not) that Hume's sceptical empiricism does not logically entail his color racism and anti-semitism, I sought to show that Hume refused to consider evidence that destroyed his racial views, and that he was in the forefront of racists of the time, a theoretician of black slavery in the colonies, in opposition to the anti-racism and abolitionism of English liberals, Quakers, and Scottish followers of Thomas Reid. An explanation of this may possibly be inferred from the paper, "Condorcet and Hume and Turgot", written for *Condorcet Studies II*. Hume, who had been extremely friendly with the French *philosophe* Turgot, broke with him over their irreconcilable differences concerning Turgot's (and later Condorcet's) theory of the progressive infinite perfectibility of human beings. For Condorcet slavery was a contradiction of human nature. For Hume, certain human groups, especially blacks, could not attain the same level of intellectual and cultural activity as whites. Hume professed the gravest doubts about the perfectibility thesis, and saw serious dangers in trying to put it into practice.

Much of what appears in this collection has resulted from two situations which greatly encouraged new explorations by me in 17th- and 18th-century thought, and the later history of scepticism. One was my association with people in Israel working on various aspects of the history of ideas, the other my very fecund year as Clark Professor at UCLA. In 1980 I began travelling to Israel for part of the academic year, teaching at Tel Aviv University, and meeting with scholars there, at Hebrew University in Jerusalem, at Haifa University, and elsewhere. I also profited from the opportunity to use some of the special resources available in the National Library of Israel, especially the Yahuda collection of unpublished papers of Isaac Newton, and the rich collection of materials about Jewish intellectual history.

I was invited to be the Clark Professor at UCLA in 1981-82. This involved organizing a series of lectures, and conducting research at the William Andrews Clark Library. I had been using this superb rare book library since 1960, when I first read Isaac La Peyrère's *Men before Adam* there. In 1975 I had given a lecture at the library on "Christian Millenarianism and Jewish Messianism". I used this as the theme of the lecture series I organized. It was also the focus of my research there. Previously I had been pursuing this theme especially in the writings of La Peyrère and Menasseh ben

Israel, its impact on later thinkers up to Newton, Joseph Priestley and David Hume. In the Clark Library collection I had access to an enormous amount of 17th-century English theology and philosophy, as well as the 17th-century English translations of such thinkers as Jacob Boehme and Jan A. Comenius. In almost daily interchange with other scholars, especially James Force, Richard Kroll, and John Rogers, who were also working at the Clark Library during that year, I was collecting the data that emerged in the articles, "The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought: Scepticism, Science and Millenarianism" and "Predicting, Prophecy, Divining and Foretelling from Nostradamus to Hume". As I have described in my autobiographical essay, "Warts and All", in Force and Watson, *The Sceptical Mode of Modern Philosophy* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), the data about the leading Millenarian theoretician, Joseph Mede, and his disciples like John Dury, Samuel Hartlib, and Henry More, suddenly fell into place, as a picture of another very major effort to overcome the sceptical crisis of the time. Mede, Dury and More, each described the epistemological, sceptical crisis, they had personally undergone, which they each resolved by finding certainty in Biblical materials, prophecies, texts, or spiritual ideas. They found support for their positive views in the philosophical theosophies of Comenius and Boehme, so that their finished statements verged far away from what we are used to in the Montaigne-Descartes tradition. However, as I found, Dury and Descartes had met in mid-crisis, when Descartes was trying to find certainty in mathematics, and Dury had just found it in Biblical prophecies. This, and Descartes's meeting with Comenius at Englebeest are two of the great non-meetings of minds. Dury, as I have subsequently found, kept writing his own "discours sur la méthode" to justify his Millenarian interpretation of Biblical prophecy. Following Charles Webster's lead, I saw that not only did these people and their followers work out a different answer to philosophical scepticism, they also contributed greatly in terms of their solution, to the formulation of modern science, especially in the work of Henry More and Isaac Newton.

I sought to place other thinkers in this new perspective of "the third force", and began exploring Spinoza's relationship to Millenarian thinkers like Peter Serrarius, Adam Boreel and the Quakers, as well as Menasseh ben Israel. I also started looking for the links between the third force ideas of Henry More, his student and co-worker, Lady Anne Conway, and that of Sir Isaac Newton. (The Clark Li-

brary possesses a very important theological manuscript of Newton's, as well as his notes on Cudworth.)

In the latter part of 1982 I was Woodruff Visiting Professor in Philosophy at Emory University. There I prepared two papers, the final form of "The Third Force", and a study for Spinoza's 350th birthday to be celebrated in Amsterdam. At the latter meeting I talked on "Spinoza and the Conversion of the Jews", and stressed his associations with various Millenarian thinkers, and raised the possibility that he had, in fact, been the Hebrew translator of two Quaker pamphlets by Margaret Fell, aimed at convincing the Jews. (In the summer of 1981, on the way back from Israel, I had finally managed to find a printed copy of the 1658 Hebrew text in the Friends Library on Euston Road in London.) A good deal of the detail about this appears in the paper, "Spinoza's Relations with the Quakers in Amsterdam". This led me to continue on a revisionist line concerning the interpretation of Spinoza, that I had begun with my studies linking him with La Peyrère. The two other papers about Spinoza in this volume indicate some other directions of my work. "Spinoza and the Three Imposters" seeks to see what he was doing in the chapters in the *Tractatus* on Jewish history in terms of discussions going on from 1656 forward about whether the founders of the three great religions were imposters. (The clandestine work, *Les Trois Imposteurs* is also called *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza*.) The most recent paper, "The Marranos of Amsterdam", a review essay about some recent studies on Spinoza and the Jewish Intellectual world in Amsterdam, introduces a new motif, that of seeing the excommunication of Spinoza as a non-ideological event from the point of view of the Amsterdam Jewish community, whose character has been much maligned in the Spinoza literature. This piece presages, I believe, a full scale study by me, on "The Inventing of Spinoza: From Sinner to Saint".

After Spinoza's birthday celebration, I went on to Israel to participate in a conference on Dutch Jewish History, and to give a paper in the series of the Israel Colloquium of the History and Philosophy of Science. There I presented the version of the "The Third Force" paper which appears in this volume. I also took the opportunity to look, for the first time, into the massive collection of unpublished Newton papers collected by Abraham S. Yahuda. I talked to Prof. Yahuda Elkana, Director of the Jerusalem Van Leer Foundation, about organizing the publication of the Newton papers (which are distributed all over the globe, with the largest portion being in Jerusalem). His encouragement had led me to pursue this goal with various Newton

scholars. It has also led me to write a series of papers about Newton, two of which are included here, "Newton's Biblical Theology and his Theological Physics", and "Newton and Maimonides".

Each year, when I travelled abroad, I would stop in London both for research and for an opportunity to discuss matters about the history of scepticism with my co-worker, Charles B. Schmitt, at the Warburg Institute. We had each in our own ways been pushing forward research about the history of scepticism in the 16th and 17th centuries. We decided that so much scholarly material had been published since we set forth our original work, that we ought to arrange a conference at which scholars from America, Europe and Israel could meet and present their latest findings. The conference was held at the Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel in 1985. My contribution was the paper, "The 'Incurable Scepticism' of Henry M^{ore}, Blaise Pascal and Søren Kierkegaard", examining a more radical form of epistemological scepticism, and the way it was resolved. At the conference, I was asked by Myles Burnyeat of Cambridge why scepticism seemed to have changed its character from the relaxed view of the ancient Pyrrhonists to the frantic view of the modern sceptics from Montaigne onward. Schmitt and I discussed preparing a second conference dealing with one aspect that we were both investigating, namely how scepticism changed in the course of the 17th century from being a nominally pro-religious view to becoming a critique of religion at the beginning of the Enlightenment. (The conference on this finally took place at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Study in the summer of 1990.)

When Charles Schmitt died suddenly in 1986, a memorial conference was prepared for him in London, at which I presented "Some Unresolved Questions in the History of Scepticism" as the final talk. A further development of one of the themes appears in "Scepticism, Old and New". This grew out of a lengthy comment on a paper of Julia Annas comparing the two kinds of scepticism. The paper that appears here was given at the Inter-American Philosophy Congress held at Buenos Aires in the summer of 1989, in which I sought to explain why modern scepticism is so concerned with the inability to find grounds for values. Two other papers deal with case studies of two thinkers, one in the 17th century, Joseph Glanvill, and the other in the 20th, Moritz Schlick, contending with scepticism. The latter paper, written for the 100th anniversary of Schlick's birth, suggests that the sceptical problem that he was unable to resolve, may be a continuing problem for contemporary thought. The former paper tries to

explicate the peculiar character of Glanvill's scepticism, something I have been working on for over forty years.

The studies of various strands of scepticism increased a conviction I have had for years, that religious issues are important for understanding the historical context of philosophical discussions. In "The Religious Background of Seventeenth-Century Philosophy", written for the 25th anniversary issue of *The Journal of the History of Philosophy*, I tried to sketch out my view, and to indicate that religious themes keep appearing in the philosophical texts that are studied, but these themes are usually ignored. In two applied case studies "Predicting, Prophesying, Divining and Foretelling from Nostradamus to Hume", and "An Aspect of the Problem of Religious Freedom in the French and American Revolutions", I have tried to show how religious ideas play an important role in philosophical discussions. The former paper traces how a notion of great importance in religious and astrological discussion from the 16th century onward was finally secularized and negated by Hume into his denial of any necessary connection between present experiences and future ones. The second paper seeks to show how different religious perspectives of the first American Catholic bishop, John Carroll, and the important French Revolutionary bishop, Henri Grégoire, led to differing reasons for advocating religious freedom on opposite sides of the Atlantic Ocean.

My view about the importance of examining the historical context of intellectual ideas and theories is set forth somewhat polemically in a brief methodological paper, "Philosophy and the History of Philosophy" (presented at a symposium of the American Philosophical Association). I tried to show how 17th- and 20th-century philosophies need historical and philological studies for their explication. This is becoming more and more obvious in the literature about the development of contemporary thought. One is usually perfectly willing to acknowledge the need to understand the historical and linguistic context in which Bertrand Russell and the Vienna positivists developed their ideas, the most bizarre context in which Wittgenstein's theories grew. Similarly, by now, the theories of Husserl, Heidegger, De Man, Derrida and Foucault get explicated in terms of their cultural and intellectual background, their relation to political transformations in Europe, and so on. But, why, I keep asking, is this still not accepted in the philosophical profession as part of explicating the classical texts of modern philosophy from Descartes to Hume and Kant? It is accepted by historians of science and historians of literature and historians of religious thought. But philosophers still

seem threatened by the vision that their enterprise may have had a history, and a history in which the very framework of the enterprise has had a history.

In two lectures I gave in 1988 I sought to show how major changes in points of view make sense in historical terms. I was asked to give the lecture at Cambridge in commemoration of the 300th anniversary of the death of Ralph Cudworth, the Cambridge Platonist. Most people are just put off by opening Cudworth's great treatise, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, and make little or nothing of it, and banish him from the serious predecessors of, and participants in, modern philosophy. Putting Cudworth in the context of the issues of the time, especially the crisis caused by the discovery of so much information about ancient and modern polytheism, indicates what Cudworth was trying to achieve, the extent to which he succeeded, and the legacy we inherited when his solution no longer helped with the issues involved. The second paper, "Roads that led beyond Judaism and Christianity", presented at the Folger Shakespeare Library earlier that same year, explores the interrelation of various sceptical themes with developments within Judaism and Christianity during the 17th century, culminating in universalistic religious views that went beyond any historical formulation of religion. This transformation does, of course, show itself in the philosophical discussions about the nature, extent and import, of religious knowledge.

This group of essays and talks covers much of the range of my historical concerns during the last decade. My original focus on the history of scepticism has continued to lead to explorations in the history of ideas of the 17th and 18th centuries, and my growing interest in the religious background has led me to explore other lines of development which help to explain how our intellectual world got to where it is. In so doing, I hope that I have both indicated my overview that philosophy needs to be understood in terms of the historical context in which it developed, and that the history of the modern intellectual world is much richer and complex than its usual narrow presentation. If I carry on another decade I expect to go further into many of the subjects covered in this volume, beginning I think with greater investigation of the intellectual significance, or lack of same, in Spinoza's excommunication from the Amsterdam Jewish community. Some papers, already written, which will appear in the next couple of years, project the next stage of my investigations. This introduction is being written while I am leading an international seminar here on the origins, content and influence of the radical irreligious work,

Les Trois Imposteurs, ou L'Esprit de M. Spinoza, which may lead to further investigations into how historical religion was attacked, and perhaps dethroned by forms of scepticism, while others forms, like Millenarianism, took on a new lease on life.

These researches have been a labor of love for me, and hopefully its fruits have helped others to delve deeper into the marvelous and varied intellectual world, or swamp, which lies beneath our present thinking in the end of the 20th century.

Richard H. Popkin

Leiden, The Netherlands, July 1990

I

HOBBES AND SCEPTICISM I*

Not too infrequently either Hobbes has been labelled a 'sceptic' by scholars, or some aspect of his thought has been claimed to be a form of scepticism. For instance, Dorothea Krook in her article on "Thomas Hobbes's Doctrine of Meaning and Truth" began by asserting, "It is generally acknowledged that Hobbes's radical scepticism is intimately connected with his nominalism".¹ A few lines later, she said: "The connection between Hobbes's scepticism and nominalism is indeed sufficiently attested by the pervasive influence of his nominalism in his whole doctrine of commonwealth in *Leviathan*..."² The paper goes into great and careful detail about the character of his scepticism from remarks like, "The peculiar interest of Hobbes's scepticism for the philosophical reader is that it is the joint product of his radical nominalism, in logic, in epistemology and in metaphysics."³

In Father Copleston's discussion of Hobbes in his history of philosophy, he devoted three pages to the question of whether Hobbes was a sceptic.⁴ Copleston felt the answer was 'no'. He pointed out that many commentators have spoken of Hobbes's nominalistic scepticism. However, he contended, "If, therefore, we press the empiricist aspect of Hobbes's philosophy, it is possible to argue that his nominalism is not necessarily infected with scepticism."⁵ The furthest Father Copleston would go was to suggest that perhaps Hobbes was a sceptic nominalist.⁶ However, Copleston maintained that anyone who reads all of Hobbes's philosophical writings is unlikely to consider that "sceptic" is the most appropriate label for his view.

* This paper originally appeared in Linus Thro, editor, *History of Philosophy in the Making. A Symposium of Essays to Honor Professor James D. Collins on His 65th Birthday* (Washington: University Press of America, 1982), pp. 133-148.

¹ Dorothea Krook, "Thomas Hobbes's Doctrine of Meaning and Truth", *Philosophy*, XXXI (1956), p. 3.

² *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 13. See also p. 8.

⁴ Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy*, Vol. V. *Hobbes to Hume* (Westminster, Maryland: Newman, 1961), pp. 17-20.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

J. W. N. Watkins, in his *Hobbes's System of Ideas*, spoke of Hobbes's ethical scepticism, as contrasted with his ethical authoritarianism. The ethical scepticism is shown to be a fairly basic part of Hobbes's case. Watkins devoted a couple of pages to trying to show that ethical scepticism is not the proper result of finding out that there cannot be a proven or well-justified system of moral propositions.⁷

Hobbes is also sometimes called a religious sceptic, partly because of his view that Moses was not the author of the entire Pentateuch. (We will discuss this later on.) One could easily multiply the free and easy way Hobbes has been labeled a sceptic, or has been saved from that label.

When I intend to do here is to try to delineate both historically and ideologically where Hobbes falls in the development of modern scepticism. Ten years ago I decided to start the next volume of my history of scepticism with Hobbes. The volume has yet to come to fruition, and I have turned my attentions for some time to ascertaining Spinoza's position in seventeenth-century scepticism.

Hobbes is historically most interesting. As we all know, Hobbes spent many years in Paris: 1629-31, 1634, 1637 and 1640-51.⁸ What is not as well-remembered is that he spent a great deal of his time, when most of his books were written, as a central member in the circle of Mersenne and Gassendi, both of whom were very interested in scepticism. I have tried to show that they were both "constructive or mitigated" sceptics, who were convinced that in a fundamental sense one could not establish the truth or falsity of any of our beliefs. Nonetheless, they each held in their own way, that we are able to find adequate ways of dealing with the world. Gassendi called what he was doing, namely developing a modern atomic system of science, a *via media* between scepticism and dogmatism.⁹ When Hobbes arrived in Paris in 1640, he stayed with a member of the Mersenne-Gassendi cir-

⁷ J. W. N. Watkins, *Hobbes's System of Ideas* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), pp. 110, 129-31.

⁸ On Hobbes's trips to France, see Gaston Sortais, *La Philosophie moderne depuis Bacon jusqu'à Leibniz*, Tome II (Paris: Lethielleux, 1922), pp. 272-85.

⁹ Richard H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1979), chap. 7, pp. 129-50. See also Arrigo Pacchi, *Convenzione e ipotesi nella formazione della filosofia naturale di Thomas Hobbes* (Florence: La Nuova Italia), 1965, on the connections of Hobbes's natural philosophy with that of Mersenne and Gassendi. Theodore Waldman sought to show that Hobbes used their type of constructive scepticism in his theory of liberty. See "Hobbes on Liberty: A Study in Constructive Scepticism", *Proceedings of the Seventh Inter-American Congress of Philosophy*; and Rudolf Ross, "Obligations,

cle, Jacques du Bosc, who was a close friend of Samuel Sorbière.¹⁰ In the Mersenne-Gassendi circle were people far more sceptical, such as Guy Patin, Gabriel Naudé, François La Mothe le Vayer, and Samuel Sorbière.¹¹ The latter was at one time working on a French translation of Sextus Empiricus.¹² After he became one of Gassendi's chief disciples (who criticized Gassendi for not being sufficiently sceptical),¹³ he was given the task by Mersenne of preparing a French translation of Hobbes' *De Cive*. Mersenne had told him that if he studied the work he would no longer be a complete sceptic.¹⁴ Sorbière translated *De Cive*, remained a sceptic, and stayed in close relations with Hobbes. When Sorbière visited England, one of the main purposes of the trip was to see Hobbes again.¹⁵

Hobbes was a member of this avant-garde group in Paris for many years. Very little has been done about examining Hobbes's views in the context of Parisian philosophy of the time. Even the French Jesuit historian of philosophy, Gaston Sortais, who dug up so much material on other members of this group, did not delve deeply into Hobbes in the French scene.¹⁶ The recently published manuscript of Hobbes's first philosophical work, his answer to Thomas White, was written in Paris, where Hobbes knew White. The manuscript was found about 30 years ago in the Bibliothèque Nationale in some papers of Mersenne.¹⁷

Science and Philosophy in the Political Writings of Hobbes," paper presented at the Hobbes Tercentenary Congress, University of Colorado, Aug. 6-8, 1979.

¹⁰ See Perez Zagorin, "Thomas Hobbes's Departure from England in 1640. An Unpublished Letter", *The Historical Journal*, XXI(1978), pp. 157-60; and Samuel Sorbière, *Sorberiana ou les pensées critiques de M. de Sorbière*, 2nd ed. (Paris 1965), art. "Bosc", pp. 55-56, and in Graverol's *Mémoire*, p. e^v.

¹¹ See Popkin, *op. cit.*, chap. V, pp. 87-109.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 106-07.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

¹⁴ Mersenne had said to Sorbière, "You will gladly renounce the suspension of judgment and the other idle talk of the Sceptics, when you will be forced to admit that dogmatic philosophy rests upon an unshakeable basis." Letter of Mersenne to Sorbière, 25 April 1646, printed in the preface of Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive* (Amsterdam, 1647). See Popkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 279-80, n.34.

¹⁵ See Vincent Guilloton, "Autour de la relation du voyage de Samuel Sorbière en Angleterre 1663-1664", *Smith College Studies in Modern Languages* XI (1930), esp. p. 18; and J. J. Jusserand, *English Essays from a French Pen* (New York, 1895), p. 174.

¹⁶ See sections in Sortais's book cited in note 8.

¹⁷ See Jean Jacquot, "Notes on an Unpublished Work of Thomas Hobbes", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society of London* IX (1952), pp. 188-195. The work

If Hobbes was deeply involved with the French new scientists, the new philosophers and the new sceptics, did he imbibe any of their views? He was definitely influenced by the mechanistic outlook that pervaded the scientific works of Mersenne, Gassendi, Descartes, and others. But, if one compares how much scepticism is discussed by Mersenne, Gassendi and Descartes, with how much space is given over to it by Hobbes, the result is most striking. Mersenne wrote a thousand-page book, *La verité des sciences contre les septiques ou pyrrhoniens*, of which the first quarter is a running commentary on Sextus Empiricus's ancient sceptical treatise, *The Outlines of Pyrrhonism*. Gassendi had written a sceptical attack on Aristotelianism, as well as the first part of his *Syntagma Philosophicum* which discussed the sceptical challenge to other epistemologies. Descartes, of course, devoted a good deal of his *Discourse on Method* and his *Meditations on First Philosophy* to developing a complete scepticism, and then overcoming it.¹⁸ Hobbes, we know, read Descartes' *Discourse* and *Meditations*, since he was one of the first persons to write an answer to Descartes.

In the light of the above, it is quite surprising that the index of the Molesworth edition of the *English Works* of Hobbes lists one entry under "Sceptics" or "Scepticism". It refers to a passage in *De Corpore* where Hobbes briefly chided the sophists and the sceptics for the way they denied and opposed the truth.¹⁹ I have come across another reference to the sceptics in Hobbes's *Six Lessons to the Professors of the Mathematics*. In this work Hobbes twice cited points in Sextus Empiricus about mathematics. (And this seems to be the sole work in which Sextus is mentioned.) In discussing what he thought were inadequacies in Euclid's definitions, Hobbes said that Sextus used some of these definitions, "to the overthrow of that so much renowned evidence of geometry!"²⁰ Later on Hobbes pointed out that Hobbes's mathematical opponent and Sextus had misunderstood Euclid's first definition. Sextus had then argued that geometry is no science. Hobbes's opponent by doing the same has "betrayed the most evident sciences to the sceptics".²¹

is published as *Thomas Hobbes, Thomas White's De Mundo Examined* (London: Beckman, 1976.)

¹⁸ On this, see Popkin, *op. cit.* chaps V, VII and IX.

¹⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *De Corpore, Elements of Philosophy. The First Section, Concerning Body*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes* (London 1839), Vol. I, p. 63.

²⁰ Hobbes, *Six Lessons to the Savilian Professors of the Mathematics*, in *English Works*, Vol. VII, p. 184.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 317-318.

These two references hardly make it seem that Hobbes cared very much about scepticism and sceptics. He lived in an intellectual society in which one of the greatest issues of the time was whether or not there was any way of overcoming the sceptical doubts about man's ability to gain knowledge about the world. In my book on the *History of Scepticism*, I have traced the way the sceptical challenge dominated French intellectual life in the first half of the seventeenth century. In contrast to this, the works Hobbes wrote while in Paris, the center of the sceptical ferment, reflect practically nothing of what was going on. Had Hobbes been a recluse who never talked to anyone in the city at the time, then the detachment in his writings from the vital issues of the time would be understandable. However, since we know that, *au contraire*, Hobbes was involved all of the time with the leading figures who were discussing scepticism, some explanation is needed to account for what Hobbes wrote in Paris. Perhaps if a detailed study were made of Hobbes's actual relationships with the French and English intellectuals in Paris, we might see if there was something odd or different about Hobbes's reactions to the ideas being discussed around him from that of the others.²²

Thus, if Hobbes does not seem to have been part of the sceptical crisis going on around him, he was nonetheless accused of being a sceptic, not in the sense of a Pyrrhonian sceptic, nor a follower of Montaigne. Rather Hobbes, as soon as he began to publish, was accused of being a sceptic about religious convictions. At the time that *De Cive* was published, Descartes charged that the work contained dangerous maxims.²³ After *Leviathan* appeared, the charge of scepticism about religion became both more precise, and more forceful. One specific item which was brought up a great deal was the claim made in Part III, chap. 33 concerning whether Moses wrote the Pentateuch. The chapter has an innocent enough looking title, "Of the Number, Antiquity, Scope, Authority and Interpreters of the Books of Holy Scripture." At the outset Hobbes points out that it was of the greatest importance to know what God hath said. The Canon of the Church of England tells us what books to accept as biblical. But, "Who were the original writers of the several Books of Holy Scripture, has not been made evident by any sufficient testimony of other

²² Professor John F. Wilson of the University of Hawaii, Manoa, Honolulu, has undertaken research into Hobbes's relation with the sceptics, free-thinkers and the like in England and France. He has kindly let me see his results, which unfortunately do not throw much more specific light on Hobbes's relations with the philosophical sceptics in France.

²³ Descartes, "Lettre au Père ***", in *Oeuvres*, Adam-Tannery edition, Tome IV, p. 67. See also Sortais, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

history, which is the only proof of a matter of fact; nor can be, by any arguments of natural reason; for reason serves only to convince the truth, not of fact, but of consequence. The light, therefore, that must guide us in this question must be that which is held out unto us from the books themselves; and this light, though it shows us not the writer of every book, yet it is not unuseful to give us knowledge of the time, wherein they were written."²⁴

Starting with the Pentateuch, Hobbes argued that it is not enough to say that they were written by Moses because they are called the five books of Moses. In fact, the last chapter of Deuteronomy deals with the death of Moses. So Hobbes declared, "It is therefore manifest, that those words were written after his interment."²⁵ If one then says Moses wrote all of the Pentateuch except for the last chapter, Hobbes then pointed to other lines in Genesis and Numbers which appear to have been after Moses. From this excursus into biblical criticism, Hobbes concluded "But, though Moses did not compile those books entirely, and in the form we have them, yet he wrote all that which he is there said to have written."²⁶

This less than shattering claim about the Mosaic authorship of the first five books of the Bible was enough to earn Hobbes a place in defenses of orthodoxy in the 17th century as a member of the unholy trinity of religious sceptics, Hobbes, Isaac La Peyrère and Spinoza, who had struck at the very foundations of religious knowledge. In later times up to the present Hobbes is usually listed in the histories of Bible scholarship as the first to publish a denial of the Mosaic authorship in 1651. We will see that his "denial" is much less a challenge than others being made at the time.

As early as the twelfth century, the Jewish scholar, Ibn Ezra (1092-1147), indicated that there were some lines that were not by Moses, because they dealt with matter after his death. Ibn Ezra did not use this to suggest any scepticism about the Bible, but rather to suggest that there might be something special in these non-Mosaic lines. During the outburst of Bible study in the 16th century, several scholars saw the difficulty involved in claiming that Moses was the sole author. Suggestions were made that perhaps Ezra wrote some or all of the Pentateuch.²⁷ From Hobbes onward the actual denial that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch was definitely a key issue on developing a scepticism about revealed religion in the Jewish or

²⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan, English Works*, Vol. III (London, 1839), pp. 267-268.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 368.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

²⁷ Popkin, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

Christian sense. At the end of the 17th century, the Catholic theologian, Louis Ellies du Pin, who put together various encyclopedias about religion and theology, declared that, "Of all of the paradoxes which have been advanced in our century, there is none more bold, in my view, nor more dangerous than the opinion of those who have denied that Moses was the author of the Pentateuch."²⁸ The dangerous sceptics who held this radical view were listed as Hobbes, La Peyrère, Spinoza and Richard Simon.²⁹ Du Pin made clear that the whole relation of the supposedly revealed document, the Bible, to the truth, becomes problematical, and a person can doubt the veracity of the Bible. Moses provided the critical link of man to God, since supposedly, God told him what is in the first five books. If the author or authors are not Moses, then the Bible becomes questionable as a source of truth.

Hobbes may have been classed with the other radical Bible scholars by those engaged in the hunting of Leviathan.³⁰ And for his views on the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch, Hobbes may have been considered a religious sceptic. However, if one compares him with La Peyrère or Spinoza, Hobbes hardly deserves to be considered a menace to established religion. Hobbes must have known La Peyrère, who was the secretary of the Prince of Condé, and a close friend of Mersenne and Gassendi and the other sceptical figures in the Mersenne circle.³¹ In 1641 La Peyrère tried to publish his masterpiece, *Men before Adam*. He dedicated it to Cardinal Richelieu, who promptly banned it. A letter by Gabriel Naudé to Cardinal Barberini in the Vatican tells us that since the book was banned, everyone was trying to get a copy of it. The correspondence of the learned people of the time indicate that Mersenne and the author, La Peyrère, were showing everyone the work. The first refutation, by Hugo Grotius, appeared in 1643. The book itself was only published (in Holland, of course) in 1655, when it created a great stir.³² It would seem likely that Hobbes knew the book and the author, since they moved in the same milieu. They had the same friends, and lots of common interests.

²⁸ Louis Ellies du Pin, *Nouvelle Bibliothèque des Auteurs Ecclésiastiques*, (2nd edition), Tome I (Paris, 1690), p. 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 30.

³⁰ See Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962), pp. 57-59, 62 and 102.

³¹ Cf. Popkin, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

³² Popkin, "The Marrano Theology of Isaac La Peyrère", *Studi Internazionali di Filosofia* V (1973), pp. 99, 103-07.

In La Peyrère's *Men before Adam* the case for doubting the Mosaic authorship is made much greater than Hobbes's. It is so much greater in fact that Hobbes's discussion of the issue looks like a truncated version of La Peyrère's. He pointed out a wide variety of Scriptural texts that most likely could not have been written by Moses. They included not only the lines about Moses's death, but also different inconsistent lines and a lot of discrepancies. From all of this the most that La Peyrère was willing to allow was that Moses probably made a diary, and part of the Biblical account is copied from this. In evaluating the evidence that he had set forth, La Peyrère enunciated his revolutionary theory: "I need not trouble the Reader much further to prove a thing in itself sufficiently evident, that the first five books of the Bible were not written by Moses, as is thought. Nor need any one wonder after this, when he reads many things confus'd and out of order, obscure, deficient, many things omitted and misplaced, when they shall consider with themselves that they are a heap of Copie confusely taken."³³ La Peyrère's denial of the Mosaic authorship was followed by still stronger cases developed by Spinoza and Richard Simon. In the light of what La Peyrère was saying before and after the publication of *Leviathan*, what Spinoza said in the *Tractatus* of 1670, and Richard Simon in his *Critical History of the Old Testament* of 1678, Hobbes hardly seems very sceptical or shocking. Simon himself told La Peyrère, "It seems to me that your reflections are going to ruin the Christian religion entirely."³⁴ An unsympathetic reader, the English jurist, Sir Matthew Hale, made a stronger claim. He said that the belief that La Peyrère's interpretations of the Bible "were true would necessarily not only weaken but overcome the Authority and Infallibility of the Sacred Scriptures."³⁵

The basic issue involved in the importance of the Mosaic authorship, is that it is through Moses's role as author and his role as direct recipient of the revelation, that the truth of Judeo-Christianity is secured. Questioning the Mosaic authorship opens the door to a powerful scepticism about the truth of accepted religion. After such questioning had done its work throughout the second half of the 17th century and throughout the Enlightenment, one of the leading sceptics with regard to religious knowledge, Tom Paine could look back

³³ Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, p. 217; Isaac La Peyrère, *Men before Adam*, (London, 1656), Book III, chap. I, pp. 204-205.

³⁴ Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, p. 220. Letter of Richard Simon to La Peyrère, in *Lettres choisies de M. Simon*, Tome II (Rotterdam, 1702), pp. 12-13.

³⁵ Sir Matthew Hale, *The Primitive Origination of Mankind* (London, 1677), p. 185.

and see the monumental effects of doubting the Mosaic authorship. "Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of *Genesis*, but an anonymous book of stories, fables and traditionary or invented absurdities or downright lies."³⁶ The importance of the Mosaic authorship was, perhaps, made still clearer by one of Paine's opponents, the Jewish polemicist, David Levi of London. In the second answer to Joseph Priestley, he asserted that "if a Jew once calls in question the authenticity of *any part* of the Pentateuch, by observing that one part is authentic, i.e., was delivered by God to Moses, and that another part is not authentic, he is no longer accounted a Jew, i.e., a true believer." Every Jew, Levi insisted, is obliged according to the thirteen principles of Maimonides "to believe that the whole law of five books is from God" and that it was delivered by Him to Moses. Christians, Levi claimed, should be under the same constraints as Jews about accepting the divine origin of Scripture, for "if any part is once proved spurious, a door will be opened for another and another without end".³⁷

The fantastic sceptical potential of the denial of the Mosaic authorship played a very important part in Western intellectual history. Of the four people who played the greatest roles in advancing the consideration of the denial of the Mosaic authorship in the 17th century—Hobbes, La Peyrère, Spinoza and Richard Simon, I think one has to conclude either that Hobbes was the least sceptical and the most timid, or that he was trivializing the sceptical implications of the matter. La Peyrère denied that Moses was the author of any of the first five books of the Bible. He thereby opened the door to rewriting or reconstructing the document. Spinoza, following on La Peyrère's work, denied the supernatural status of the Bible, and portrayed it as a compendium of views of the early Hebrews. It thereby became essentially a secular document to be studied as part of the history of human stupidity. Father Richard Simon, who scandalized his fellow Catholics, insisted that he accepted many of the maxims of Spinoza but not their impious conclusions. Simon insisted, Spinoza and La Peyrère notwithstanding, that he believed that the Bible was an inspired document, whose content was revealed by God to man, or men. However, and unfortunately, no existent copy of the Bible is

³⁶ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason, Part the Second, being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (London, 1795), p. 14.

³⁷ David Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley in Answer to his Letter to the Jews Part II, occasioned by Mr. David Levi's Reply in the Former Part*, (London, 1789), pp. 14-15.

inspired. All are written by men, printed by men, read by men, in historical contexts. They have to be studied for what they are in the hopes of finding the real Bible behind or above, or under, all of the existent ones.³⁸

Thus Simon made all extant Bibles copies or imitations of a real one. We were, on his terms, forced into a scepticism about the truth of any particular religious claim until we could reach knowledge about the real Bible. Spinoza, on the other hand, was a complete sceptic about any kind of revealed knowledge. Even if Moses wrote any of the Bible, is there any reason to believe that Moses had any genuine religious knowledge, rather than imagined religious ideas? La Peyrère, who was actually a Messianic mystic, cast doubt on the whole text of the Pentateuch, and reduced it to a "heap of copie of copie". When one gets back to Hobbes, in the light of what his three contemporary Bible critics set forth, the passage in *Leviathan* is very tepid. Hobbes went a few steps beyond what some of the earliest 16th- and 17th-century Bible scholars said about the problem of whether Moses could have written all of the Pentateuch. Hobbes accepted the negative evidence, that concerning the passage about Moses's death and about events thereafter. Then Hobbes opted for a conciliatory position (even though his contemporaries may not have seen it as such). All passages which are attributed in Scripture to Moses were actually written by him. This would preserve part of the crucial revelatory link between God, Moses, and man. A most significant part of the text could still be regarded as God's undoubted message to mankind. If one accepted Hobbes at this word, one might have to modify his claim in this chapter of *Leviathan* that he accepted the Scriptural Canon of the Church of England. Hobbes's Pentateuch would be a bit smaller than the Church of England's text. But, again taking Hobbes at his word, there would be no question or doubt, no scepticism with regard to religious knowledge about the Hobbesian Mosaic Pentateuch. Hence Hobbes, on this score, was hardly the sceptic that La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon were. In spite of this he obviously went too far, in allowing any cuts in the text of the Pentateuch. His English clerical opponents went in for the hunting of *Leviathan*, and accused Hobbes of being an unbeliever, an atheist, a religious sceptic.³⁹

Hobbes may have been caught up in what followed. La Peyrère was considered an interesting man with unusual ideas. As long as he just showed his manuscript to leading scholars and churchmen, nothing happened. As soon as he finally published it, at Queen Christina

³⁸ Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, pp. 226-227.

³⁹ Mintz, *op. cit.*

of Sweden's behest, the book was banned in Holland (a quite unusual event of the time), burned in Paris, published in England (where it was never banned), and the author was imprisoned. He only got out of prison by abjuring his many heresies, and turning from Calvinism to Catholicism and personally apologizing to the Pope.⁴⁰ Spinoza was excommunicated from the Amsterdam Synagogue in 1656. Some recent evidence indicates that part of the grounds for the excommunication was that Spinoza and two of his friends had started developing a critical Bible scholarship in the style of La Peyrère.⁴¹ From then on Spinoza was a notorious figure. The publication in 1670 of his *Tractatus* led to its being banned and being treated as the most dangerous work of the time. Simon published his masterpiece, *The Critical History of the Old Testament* in 1678, a year before Hobbes died. The rest of Father Simon's life was spent defending himself, while losing one ecclesiastical post after another, until he was reduced to being a priest without a diocese or function.⁴² In view of the persecutions of La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon, their opponents may have read backwards and seen that the religious scepticism of the three followed after the timid initial questioning of the Mosaic authorship by Thomas Hobbes. Hobbes's questioning by itself might not have been enough to launch the Higher Criticism of the Bible. Followed by braver figures, La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon, who could see much more drastic implications, Hobbes became the forerunner or the initiator of a key element involved in the development of religious scepticism, the question of the Mosaic authorship, the guarantee of the truth of the content of the Bible. Hobbes got blamed for the full-blown results of his successors. As Samuel Mintz has shown, Hobbes was often attacked together with Spinoza by thinkers in England and the Continent.⁴³ And the States General in Holland, which had banned La Peyrère's *Men before Adam* in 1655, banned both *Leviathan* and Spinoza's *Tractatus* in 1674.⁴⁴

A significant effect within Hobbes's philosophical system, involving his denial that Moses wrote some parts of the Pentateuch, was his conclusion that the full truth of revelation cannot be known with certainty. Different interpretations of the biblical texts have, and do lead to disagreements and to disturbances in the civil order. Therefore, in

⁴⁰ See Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, pp. 219 and 222-223.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 227.

⁴² Jean Steinmann, *Richard Simon et les origines de l'exégèse biblique* (Paris: Desclée, 1960.)

⁴³ Mintz, *op.cit.*, pp. 57-59, 62 and 102.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 62.

order to maintain civil peace, it must be left to the civil magistrate to interpret Scripture. Here Hobbes appealed to a view which in another form appeared in *De Cive*, which is, I believe, his real contribution to modern scepticism. 'Hobbes may have lived, eaten and drunk among French sceptics, but no influence appears in his works. The issues they worried about are hardly dealt with in his writings. Hobbes may have been a predecessor, and possibly a friend (in the case of La Peyrère) of the religious sceptics, but he did not suggest at all the line they were to develop, that if it is doubtful that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, it is doubtful that the content of those books constitutes religious truth. Instead Hobbes pointed to a radically different solution, that of a political rather than an epistemological criterion of truth.

John Watkins considered Hobbes to be an ethical sceptic for his holding that there was no absolute or independent criterion of moral truth, but only a political one.⁴⁵ Hobbes said in *De Cive* that, "Before there was any government, *just* and *unjust* had no being, their nature only being relative to some command, and every action in its own nature is indifferent; that it becomes *just* or *unjust*, proceeds from the right of the magistrate."⁴⁶ As Watkins pointed out, according to Hobbes, it is not due to the fact that the sovereign is in possession of some superior moral knowledge that his laws are "just". It is the same situation as with the sovereign's theological interpretations.⁴⁷ They are authoritative, not because the sovereign has any special superior theological knowledge. The sceptical element in both the moral and the religious case lies in Hobbes's conviction that there is no rational means for deciding between either competing moral or competing religious claims. Hence, Hobbes has denied that there is any rational criterion of knowledge in these areas. Since it is necessary for social reasons that moral and religious decisions be made, the sovereign makes the decision (arbitrarily from the point of view of rational evidence for the decision), and the decision is to be accepted by the populace as if it were true. Whether the sovereign decides that people should do one thing, or should do the opposite, either decision would be equally just. This kind of ethical and theological scepticism derives from two elements of Hobbes's thought. One is his nominalism that several of the commentators identify with his scepticism or relate much more to 15th-century Ockamites than to 17th-century scepticism. The theory which seems to emerge from his

⁴⁵ Watkins, *op.cit.*, p. 130.

⁴⁶ Hobbes, *De Cive* XIII. i., p.151

⁴⁷ Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

Elements of Law, *De Corpore*, *De Cive* and *Leviathan* would restrict knowledge to names, and make names arbitrary. Names become more than individuals' private marks for elements in their experience, by becoming part of a socially acceptable language. This much of the Hobbesian account, oft-repeated in his works, suggests that there is no other standard by which to judge names, and propositions in which they occur. (Some commentators, to avoid endorsing the apparent results of this nominalistic theory, stress the instances where Hobbes appeared to point to some kind of self-evidence within the propositions whose truth was alleged to be beyond question, or to the logical relations of names as the standard of truth.)⁴⁸

The second element has been mentioned above with regard to theological and religious propositions, namely that there are social consequences of naming that can cause social friction, civil war, and so on. In Hobbes's day one did not need to produce any arguments to convince people that religious differences did and could produce social disturbances of great magnitude. After all, Hobbes's theory was published at the end of the Thirty Years War and during the English Civil War. The consequences of moral disagreements are objects in so many daily quarrels, crimes, etc. The social disorder that is constantly being produced by religious and moral disagreements is so divisive and so destructive of the public peace, that there is an overriding practical reason why these disagreements have to be resolved, even if they cannot be resolved in terms of rational criteria, procedures and evidence. Hence a political resolution is seen by Hobbes as the only way out of the endless turmoil and chaos that these kinds of disagreements could cause. The sovereign then decrees the solutions, not because he knows which solutions are right and wrong, or better or worse, but because he knows that for the social good there must be solutions.

If Hobbes had restricted his use of political solutions to moral and religious questions, his readers might have been willing to find his theory acceptable. Perhaps, however, Hobbes knew from his own case history, that scientific and mathematical disagreement could lead to social rather than intellectual difficulties. There are plenty of stories about how obnoxious Hobbes was as an arguer. We know he spent years trying to convince mathematicians of his method for squaring the circle. Dr. Wallis's remark that trying to explain mathematics to Hobbes was like trying to explain colors to a blind man, seems to reflect the extreme difficulties of dealing with Hobbes in intellec-

⁴⁸ See for instance, Richard Peters, *Hobbes* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), p. 58.

tual society.⁴⁹ Hobbes obviously knew that intellectual views could cause a social uproar. Mintz's book ably documents that Hobbes had succeeded in accomplishing that.⁵⁰ And Hobbes was aware, at least in *De Cive*, when he indicated that purely intellectual disagreements can affect the public peace, and that the same political means had to be employed to eliminate these disagreements as were employed to terminate ethical and theological ones. This would seem to lead to a special kind of scepticism, a political scepticism, in which there are no intellectual standards of truth and falsity, only political ones. And the assessment of the political standards is pragmatic: do they work to preserve the polis? not, are they true and right?

To what extent did Hobbes hold such a view? I have found this political sceptical view only in the latter parts of *De Cive*. There Hobbes considered the question of what happens if people disagree about definitions. The context clearly indicates that Hobbes was talking about all kinds of definitions, not just moral or theological ones.

"It is needful therefore, as oft as any controversy ariseth in these matters contrary to the public good and common peace, that there be somebody to judge of the reasoning, that is to say, whether that which is inferred, be rightly inferred or not; that so the controversy may be ended. But there are no rules given by Christ to this purpose, neither came he into the world to teach *logic*. It remains therefore that the judges of such controversies, be the same with those whom God by nature had instituted before, namely, those who in each city are constituted by the sovereign. Moreover, if a controversy be raised of the accurate and proper signification, that is the definition of those names or appellations which are commonly used; insomuch as it is needful for the peace of the city, or the distribution of right, to be determined, the determination will belong to the city. For men, by reasoning, do search out such kind of definitions in their observation of diverse conceptions, for the signification whereof those appellations were used at diverse times and for diverse causes. But the decision of the question, whether a man do reason rightly, belongs to the city. For example, if a woman bring forth a child of an unwonted shape, and the law forbid to kill a man, the question is whether the child be a man. It is demanded therefore, what a man is. No man doubts but the city shall judge it, and that without taking an account of Aristotle's definition that man is a rational creature. All these things, namely, *right*, *policy*, and *natural sciences*, are subjects concerning which Christ denies that it belongs to his office to give any precepts, or teach any thing beside this only; that in all controversies about them, every single subject should obey the laws and determinations of his city."⁵¹

⁴⁹ On Hobbes's quarrels with the mathematicians and especially with Wallis, see Peters, *op. cit.*, pp. 37, 38 and 40.

⁵⁰ Mintz, *op. cit.*

⁵¹ *De Cive* XVII, pp. 268-269. There are passages in *De Cive* II, i, pp. 14-17, (esp. the note on p. 16); and *Leviathan* I, chap. 4, pp. 21-29, that suggest this sceptical

The quotation makes clear that Hobbes was talking about scientific propositions as well as moral and religious ones being assigned their truth values by the political authorities. Hobbes went on in *De Cive* to point out that observance of natural laws is one way people are led to salvation. These laws are taught as theorems by natural reason, or by divine authority. Drawing conclusions by natural reason involves employing human principles and contracts, and thus "is subject to the censure of civil powers". Hobbes expanded his point that whatever is not revealed, namely moral and political principles "and the examination of doctrines and books in all manner of rational science depends upon the *temporal right*." Even the distinction of what is spiritual and what is temporal must be made by the temporal authorities "because our Saviour hath not made that distinction." The sovereign or sovereigns in each city thus are "the supreme authority of judging and determining all manner of controversies about *temporal matters*".⁵²

If men followed their own opinions, they would dissolve society. There would be controversies that "should become innumerable and indeterminable".⁵³ Hobbes started from describing what would happen in the religious case. He next considered questions about human science, "whose truth is sought out by natural reason and syllogisms, drawn from the covenants of men, and definitions, that is to say, significations received by use and common consent of words; such as are all questions of right and philosophy".⁵⁴ Unless the common consents are accepted, all human society collapses.⁵⁵

Richard Peters, who puts special stress on the passages quoted above, first spells out the import of what Hobbes was saying, namely that scientific disputes involving matters of public importance would have to be judged by political authorities.⁵⁶ Thus, and this is my example, not Peters's, Velikovsky's astronomical theories, since they have stirred up a lot of controversy, and have produced ardent and forceful partisans amongst the scientific establishment and among other intellectual groups, and since this has resulted in public disputes, disruptive disagreements, nasty publications, and since this

possibility. I am grateful to Professor Ezequiel de Olaso for pointing this out to me. I am also grateful to Professor de Olaso for letting me see his unpublished a paper on "Thomas Hobbes y la recta razón".

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁵³ Hobbes, *De Cive* XVII, sec. 27, p. 293.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, sec. 28, p. 295.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 296-297.

⁵⁶ Peters, *op. cit.*, pp. 55-57.

has also resulted in confusing a great many people about what is true and false in astronomy, and about how much the establishment astrophysicists can be trusted, the whole issue, which obviously has political consequences, is to be settled politically by the civil authorities. This has all of the earmarks of what the state legislature of Indiana was trying to accomplish when it passed a law making $\pi=3$, or what the state of Tennessee was trying to accomplish when they banned the teaching of Darwin's theory of evolution. Similarly, Hobbes's view smacks of what the Russian government was doing when it rejected Einsteinian physics and modern genetics for political reasons.

Peters commented on these passages in Hobbes by declaring, "it must be said, however, that this bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth is usually put forward when Hobbes is concerned to delimit the respective spheres of secular and ecclesiastical jurisdiction or when he is troubled about the kinds of disputes that provoke civil unrest".⁵⁷ This bizarre theory is certainly not unknown in our own day, and I will come back to this in a moment. First I should like to indicate that the theory seems to grow out of a fundamental kind of scepticism, that arises for Hobbes in the very attempt to distinguish the secular from the religious. Not only have we found no indubitable criteria to employ to make the distinction, we also realize the tremendous price that has to be paid if we are unable to make such a distinction, the price of the disintegration of our civil units, Our inability to live with any satisfaction under such circumstances leads us back to the acceptance of a sovereign and the acceptance of his judgment. Thus we apparently would not be led to this bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth if there were not ample sceptical grounds for disputing any human conclusions, and if these disputes were not corrosive of the public order. On the first point Hobbes (at least as he stated his view at the end of *De Cive*) saw that the sceptical attacks undermined any human being's claim to know absolutely or definitely any truth claim. Every alleged claim could be disputed. This would lead to the world being a debating society, except for the fact that some of the issues in dispute have important consequences in the social world. But the latter can lead to the dissolution of society. Therefore, the civil authority has to step in and announce who is right.

This political theory of truth, based on a total scepticism about an individual's ability to discover the truth, is a remarkable change in the pattern of sceptical thought in the 17th century. Various friends of Hobbes's were sceptics and fideists. They doubted man's ability

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 57.

to find truth, and therefore, by *non sequitur*, they accepted truth on faith from God or His Church. Hobbes, partly because of his analysis of what constitutes the Church, saw, at least in this chapter of *De Cive*, that fideism comes down to acceptance of a sovereign agency as the source of truth.

Father Mersenne, in a letter that is printed in the French edition of *De Cive*, told the translator, Samuel Sorbière, (who called himself on the title page one of Hobbes's friends) that Hobbes's noble philosophy is demonstrated as evidently as Euclid's geometry. Therefore, Mersenne went on, Sorbière will give up his suspense of judgment and all of the bagatelles of the sceptics, and become a dogmatist, whose foundations are unshakeable.⁵⁸ Neither Sorbière nor Mersenne seems to have commented on the scepticism that emerged at the end of the book.

Hobbes, who had apparently ignored the sceptical discussions of his French friends, opened the door to a new kind of scepticism. He might have been influenced by the Machiavellism of Naudé's *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'état*.⁵⁹ I have tried to show for 25 years that modern scepticism emerged from the religious quarrels of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation. One of its forms that flourished in Hobbes's day was fideism—a complete scepticism coupled with the acceptance of various principles on faith. It was only from Bayle to Hume that the fideism moved from a religious to an animal faith. Hobbes, at least once, realized that the so-called faith would have to be acceptance of authority, and the only recognizable authority was a civil one. Then truth became political as the only means of setting arguments and preserving the peace. This bizarre theory is, of course, closer to the character of modern scepticism than the views of Hobbes's friends and contemporaries. As we approach 1984 on the calendar, with its Ministry of Truth, we become more aware of government-generated truth in Russia and America. One could speak at length on the new version of Descartes' demonic scepticism developed by brainwashing, by propaganda, by classifying and falsifying records, etc.⁶⁰ Here I just want to mention a couple of points. In the 20th century, world governments have taken the initiative and are now all entrenched in the business of declaring what is

⁵⁸ Marin Mersenne to Samuel Sorbière, 25 April 1646, preface to Hobbes, *Le Citoyen* and *De Cive* (Amsterdam, 1647).

⁵⁹ Gabriel Naudé, *Considérations politiques sur les coups d'état*. Sur la Copie de Rome 1667 (Cologne, 1744).

⁶⁰ See on this, Harry M. Bracken, "Descartes, Orwell, Chomsky, Philosophers of the Demoic", *The Human Context* IV (1972), pp. 523-36.

true, creating the evidence, and forcing people to accept it. Governments have also taken the initiative in declaring what is, and what is not a threat to peace. (Draft-card burning, speaking to foreigners, listening to Radio Free Europe, opposing government policy, not filling out the administration's personnel efficiency card, etc.) The result is the totalitarian state with its helpless sceptical citizens.

So Hobbes, though almost oblivious to his contemporary epistemological sceptics, and far more cautious than his contemporary religious ones, did at one point lay the groundwork for a much more dangerous scepticism involved in making the sovereign the political arbiter of truth. From arbiter to creator of truth, the modern state then develops its Orwellian character. With no means of delimiting its power to create truth, and to maintain the peace, the citizen becomes helpless. Hobbes with his great concern to preserve the possibility of civil life in an extremely chaotic age, could not foresee what this state, the preserver of peace, could become with sufficient technological advances.

II

HOBBS AND SCEPTICISM II

Nine years ago, at the 300th anniversary of Hobbes's demise, I presented a paper on "Hobbes and Scepticism" (published in 1982).¹ Since then the researches of Ezequiel de Olaso, Marshall Missner, Richard Tuck and myself have thrown further light on some of the themes I discussed.

Persons other than myself, who see the interaction of scepticism and anti-scepticism as a crucial interplay of ideas from the mid-16th century onward, have wondered, as I have, where Hobbes's views fit in this perspective. Hobbes's text is not usually like that of Montaigne, Bacon, Mersenne or Gassendi, in overtly discussing themes from Sextus Empiricus and Cicero. Sextus is only cited twice,² "scepticism", mentioned one or two times.³ The fact that Hobbes worked on his mature philosophy in Paris from 1640 to 1651, when he was part of the Mersenne circle, when he was in close contact with Gassendi, when his doctor was the sceptic Gui Patin, has led many of us to think that Hobbes must have known about the lively on-going discussion of scepticism reflected in Descartes' *Meditations*, and in the objections to it written by Mersenne, Gassendi and Hobbes, in Gassendi's attempt to develop a *via media* between scepticism and dogmatism. The translator of *De Cive*, Samuel Sorbière, chosen by Mersenne, was an avowed Pyrrhonist who had once starting translating Sextus Empiricus into French. Sorbière became quite friendly with Hobbes, and visited him in England.⁴ It is tempting to suspect Hobbes knew Isaac La Peyrère, the heretical secretary of the Prince of Condé, who was developing a theory of Biblical criticism and pre-Adamism in the 1640s. Mersenne was sending La Peyrère's book and the author to other members of

¹ Richard H. Popkin, "Hobbes and Scepticism", in Linus J. Thro, *History of Philosophy in the Making. A Symposium to Honor Professor James D. Collins* (Washington: Catholic University Press, 1982), pp. 133-148 [repr. above, pp. 9-26].

² Thomas Hobbes, *Six Lessons to the Savilian Professors of Mathematics*, in *The English Works of Thomas Hobbes*, Vol. VII (London, 1839)

³ Hobbes, *De Corpore, Elements of Philosophy. The First Section, Concerning Body*, in *English Works*, Vol. I, p. 63.

⁴ On Sorbière and Hobbes, see R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 106-107 and 139.

the Republic of Letters, so one presumes that Hobbes was introduced to the man and his ideas. Hugo Grotius, a good friend of Hobbes in his Paris days, wrote the first answer to La Peyrère's pre-Adamite theory in 1643. La Peyrère described the state of nature in terms like Hobbes. He discovered the problems of the Biblical text, going over the same items that Hobbes explored.⁵

Given all of this, Hobbes should fit in the world of sceptical and anti-sceptical developments. Richard Tuck has provided a new lead in showing that Hobbes was extending Grotius's answer to Carneadean scepticism.⁶ Hugo Grotius, the Swedish ambassador in Paris, was actively involved with the Mersenne circle. He wrote against La Peyrère's pre-adamism long before the book appeared.⁷ It may well be that Hobbes took the effect of modern scepticism, as Grotius did, as a way of wiping away the cobwebs of the period, and then offered a new science of man without much metaphysics, as part of what Tuck calls, a "post-sceptical" endeavor.⁸ In a paper on "Hobbes and Descartes" at the recent Hobbes conference at Oxford, Tuck showed that Hobbes's presentation of his position developed out of the attempt to deal with Descartes's answer to scepticism. Both Hobbes's and Gassendi's answers to Descartes are part of their efforts to present new views for the new science in terms of a 'mitigated' or 'post' sceptical attitude, what Gassendi called a *via media* between scepticism and dogmatism.⁹ As Hobbes is being seen in the French context in which he worked out his general philosophy, he is emerging more obviously as one of the major thinkers wrestling with the sceptical crisis of the time.

As soon as Hobbes published *De Cive* and *Leviathan*, he was accused of being a sceptic. This accusation, which followed him to his grave, centered on contending that Hobbes doubted and undermined

⁵ Cf. Isaac La Peyrère, *Men before Adam, or a Discourse upon the twelfth, thirteenth and fourteenth Verses of the Fifth Chapter of the Epistle of the Apostle Paul to the Romans* (London, 1656), chap. xviii, pp. 42-45, and Richard H. Popkin, *Isaac La Peyrère (1596-1677). His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 42-45 and 49.

⁶ Richard Tuck, "Grotius, Carneades and Hobbes", *Grotiana* IV (1983), pp. 43-62.

⁷ Hugo Grotius, *Dissertatio altera de origine Gentium Americanarum adversus obtractatorem* (s.l., 1643).

⁸ Cf. Richard Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law", in Anthony Pagden, *The Languages of Political Theory in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), pp. 99-119.

⁹ Richard Tuck, "Hobbes and Scepticism", in the volume of studies on Hobbes, edited by J. A. G. Rogers (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989).

true claims of the Christian religion, rather than on contending that he was a sceptic about the possibility of human knowledge in general.¹⁰ Tuck has shown that Hobbes was also accused of being a moral sceptic who dismissed scepticism by adopting a scepticism about any objective justice or morality; and by advocating a kind of scepticism by making self-interest the sole basis of human conduct.¹¹

Missner and Tuck have indicated that certain texts of Hobbes about how we know about people, our motives, and those of others, suggest that Hobbes was dealing with issues in epistemological scepticism, albeit in a less obvious language and manner than Montaigne or Gassendi did.¹² There are interesting threads being explored in these areas. Here I should like to say more about two sceptical themes that I discussed in my earlier paper in the light of what De Olaso and I have been exploring. One is that Hobbes, a couple of times, undermines any objective criterion of knowledge, and makes the epistemic conclusion of what is true or false a political matter to be decided by the sovereign, because of its social and political importance in keeping the civil peace, and avoiding return to the state of nature, in which everyone has his or her personal truth, but in which there is no public truth. The other item I wish to explore further is the extent to which Hobbes may or may not have been a religious sceptic.

To start with the second matter, I will try to show that two themes in Hobbes, his Biblical criticism and his explanation of how and why pagan religions developed, quickly took on a different coloration in the intellectual context after 1656. Hobbes's view on whether Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, I will argue, has less radical consequences than the view on this subject of La Peyrère, of Spinoza, and of Father Richard Simon. Similarly, Hobbes's view on how and why pagan religions developed has less radical consequences than that of Spinoza, or of the anonymous and clandestine work, *Les Trois Imposteurs, ou l'Esprit de M. Spinoza*. But, Hobbes's texts, read after these other writers had appeared, then were seen, and not without reason, as the antecedent step to these sceptical views in Spinoza. Put historically, Hobbes views on the dynamics of religious development were incorporated from 1656 onward into the emerging text of *Les*

¹⁰ See Samuel I. Mintz, *The Hunting of Leviathan*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1962).

¹¹ Tuck, "Grotius, Carneades and Hobbes," p. 61.

¹² On Marshall Missner, see his article, "Skepticism and Hobbes's Political Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Ideas* XLIV (1983), pp. 407-427. See Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law", in Pagden, *The Language of Political Theory*, p. 110.

Trois Imposteurs (where they are quoted at length).¹³ Hobbes' view of the Mosaic authorship was quickly taken as the beginning of the radical and sceptical religious scepticism of La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon, and was taken as leading to Spinoza's conclusion that Scripture has no special status as revealed knowledge, but is just another human creation.¹⁴

First, let us consider some of the context of Biblical scholarship in Hobbes's day. Two kinds of Biblical criticism were developing, one epistemological (that of François Veron and Samuel Fisher) and the other humanistic and textual (that of Fisher and La Peyrère). The first was an attack from the Catholic side and then from the Quakers, challenging the literalism and Scripturalism of the Protestants. One of the most prominent teachers at La Flèche in the time when Mersenne and Descartes were students there, was the Jesuit, François Veron, who developed what he called 'the new machine of war' to destroy the Calvinists who claimed that Scripture was the rule of faith. Veron's method (as he called it) was first to challenge whether the Calvinists had any means or criterion for establishing what book was Scripture, the Word of God. The books entitled 'Holy Scripture' could contain anything—laundry lists, student exercises, diplomatic dispatches, etc. To tell that a particular writing was the Word of God required some evidence apart from the writing. Next, if one could tell which book is Scripture, how could one determine (a) if it said anything, (b) what it said, and (c) what one should do about it? The book was made up of ink marks on paper. Interpreting them as words, instead of as fly-specks, was again introducing a criterion outside of Scripture. Interpreting the words, the blocks of letters, as having meaning, was again introducing a criterion outside of Scripture. And, concluding that certain blocks of words should be connected to other ones, and inferences drawn from them, involved further non-Scriptural criteria, like the laws of inference. Finally, deciding that one should do anything about what one read, required further external criteria.¹⁵

¹³ At present the most available text of *Les Trois Imposteurs* is that edited by Pierre Rétat, a reprint of the 1777 printing (Saint-Etienne: Universités de la Région Rhone-Alpes, 1973). A critical edition of the first printing of 1719 will soon appear, edited by Silvia Berti. Hobbes is cited a good deal in third chapter.

¹⁴ Louis Ellies-du Pin, *Nouvelle Bibliothèque des Auteurs Écclesiastiques*, 2^me édition, Tome I (Paris, 1690), p. 4.

¹⁵ On Veron and his "machine de guerre", see R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1979), chap. iv.

Veron claimed that his epistemological questioning did not affect Catholic believers, since they could rely upon the decisions of Church Councils and declarations of Popes to tell them what book is the Bible, what it says, and what they should do. The Calvinists who try to base their religious knowledge *solely* on Scripture, then face a series of sceptical challenges that undermine any religious-knowledge claims. If they retreat, as some of the French Reformers did, to appealing to common sense, reason and logic, then Veron pointed out they were basing their religion on man's dubious faculties. And, he asked, why should the logic of pagans like Zeno or Aristotle be taken as a rule of faith?¹⁶

Veron was so successful that he was made official defender of the faith to the King of France. He publicly debated the leading French Protestants. He was extremely well-known during the time that Hobbes was in Paris, and his method of controversy was taken over by Cardinal Richelieu and others. So, it is not hard to believe that Hobbes heard of this kind of challenge to the Bible as the source of religious knowledge, and did not find it exciting.

A second type of epistemological challenge dealt with historical difficulties that raised basic problems about religious knowledge. These are best found in the 900-page work by the Quaker Samuel Fisher, which only was published in 1660.¹⁷ But the central points in Fisher's challenge had appeared in one form or another earlier.

Fisher raised two kinds of problems—can one ascertain that Scripture is the Word of God if one does not know the Word of God independently? One has a collection of books, containing histories, stories, moral advice, and so on. If this book has a special status over other works, this has to be justified by knowing that the book contains the Word of God. To know this, the Word of God has to be compared with the contents of the book.¹⁸

Fisher also pointed out that Abel, Enoch, Abraham, Noah, Isaac, Jacob and Moses all knew the Word of God before there was any written text, so, "The Word of God", must refer to something other than the text that can be compared with it.¹⁹

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

¹⁷ On Samuel Fisher, see R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza and Samuel Fisher", *Philosophia* XV (1985), pp. 219-236. Fisher's great work is entitled *Rusticus ad Academicos in Exercitationibus Apologeticis Quatuor. The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies, Or the Country correcting the University and Clergy and (not without good cause) Contesting for the Truth, against Nursing Mothers and their Children* (s.l., 1660).

¹⁸ Popkin, "Spinoza and Samuel Fisher", pp. 222-225. This theme is developed over and over again throughout Fisher's text.

¹⁹ Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 56-58.

The second of Fisher's problems was that the now existing text is a historical compound. We do not have a holograph copy. Instead we have what La Peyrère called "a heap of copy of copy". What we have indicates that parts of the original have been lost, parts added later than Moses, and later than Ezra's reconstitution of the Mosaic text. The decision about what items are part of Scripture was made, we are told, by a group of ancient rabbis long after the events in the Bible. The decision of what was an accurate text of either the Old or New Testaments was made long after the text had gone through many transmissions. The process by which the text got from Moses and Ezra and the prophets, and the Apostles, to us is a complicated sequence of historical events, each of which involved fallible human beings copying prior texts. The huge number of variants in existing copies indicate the problem. To make matters worse, we know that Hebrew vowels were added at a late date, long after Biblical times, and there is reason to suspect iota-subscripts got confused with fly-specks. And if one needs more problems, consider that the very people who transmitted the texts were blind, stiff-necked Jews, or idolatrous Catholics, followers of the Anti-Christ. Why accept their results, or those of human, money-grubbing printers and publishers from Gutenberg to the present. Only if one knows the Word of God can one tell that a given exemplar entitled 'Scripture' does or does not contain God's message.²⁰

Fisher compounded his radical Bible criticism from points he garnered from Bible scholars, and from his knowledge of Jewish history and Church history. Isaac La Peyrère by 1641 or so had seen the transmission problem as leading to the view that it is possible that no present copy is accurate, and that some kind of reconstruction or rewriting of the present text is called for.²¹

When Hobbes took up the question in Part III, chap. 33 of *Leviathan*, of whether Moses was the author of the Pentateuch, he was posing an historical question that did not immediately lead to sceptical questions. Hobbes began by saying it was all-important to know what God has said. The Church of England tells us what books we should accept as Biblical. But, "Who were the original writers of the several Books Holy Scripture, has not been made evident by any sufficient testimony of other history, which is the only proof of a matter of fact... The light, therefore, that must guide us, in this question, must be that which is held out unto us from the books themselves, and this

²⁰ Fisher, *op. cit.*, pp. 339-372, 418-420 and 522-541; and Popkin, "Spinoza and Fisher", pp. 228-231.

²¹ Popkin, *La Peyrère*, chap. iv, esp. pp. 49-52.

light, though it shows us not the writer of every book, yet it is not un-useful to give us knowledge of the time, wherein they were written.”²² For Hobbes the question of whether the Bible contained the Word of God was settled by the Church of England, which had also settled which books are Biblical.²³ The question that had not been answered was a historical one—did Moses write all that is attributed to him, namely the first five books of the Old Testament? Hobbes pointed out that the last chapter of Deuteronomy deals with the death of Moses. “It is therefore manifest, that those words were written after his interment.”²⁴ Hobbes also pointed to other lines in Genesis and Numbers which appear to have been written after Moses. From this small entry into what is now called “Biblical criticism”, Hobbes drew the conclusion that “though Moses did not compile these books entirely, and in the form we have them; yet he wrote all that which he is there said to have written”.²⁵

The problem of the Mosaic authorship quickly became a central issue in Biblical criticism, and Hobbes was seen as one of the unholy trinity of religious sceptics—Hobbes, Isaac La Peyrère and Baruch de Spinoza. Hobbes was usually listed as the first to publish a denial of the Mosaic authorship in 1651. But his denial is very moderate, and even trivial, when compared to what others said. I will suggest that Hobbes was seen as a religious sceptic because of what La Peyrère, Spinoza and Richard Simon said in the decades afterwards, rather than for what appears in his actual text.

Hobbes did not discover the verses about Moses’s death. Various explanations had been offered by Jewish and Christian exegetes. The modern form of the problem comes from the Jewish scholar, Ibn Ezra (1092-1167) who distinguished the Mosaic and the non-Mosaic lines, and suggested that there might be something special about the non-Mosaic ones. He did not suggest that the non-Mosaic lines did not

²² Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, in *English Works*, Vol. III, chap. xxxiii, pp. 367-368.

²³ There is a curious problem here. Hobbes took the Church of England as the arbiter of matters of faith because it was the church of the realm. At the time he wrote and published *Leviathan* no visible churches in England were those of the Church of England. That Church, at the time, only existed in Paris as the church of the royalist exiles. So, why, on Hobbes’s theory of power and sovereignty, should the Church of England’s views carry any weight, except for the exile community in Paris, of which he was a member? Nonetheless, Hobbes began the discussion in *Leviathan*, Part III, chap. xxxiii, by just accepting the word of the Church of England as to which books constitute the Bible.

²⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part III, chap. xxxiii, p. 368.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 369.

contain religious knowledge.²⁶ Some suggestions were made by later interpreters that Ezra, the scribe, wrote the non-Mosaic lines. Very soon after Hobbes, the denial of the Mosaic authorship of every line of the Pentateuch became the opening wedge in developing a scepticism about Jewish or Christian revealed religion. Samuel Fisher and La Peyrère argued that Moses could not be the author of the present mixed-up text. La Peyrère, who was working on his Biblical criticism during the 1640s and early 1650s, consulting the leading Bible scholars, was part of the Mersenne circle, and knew many of the people Hobbes knew. La Peyrère, a Calvinist, probably of Jewish origins, contended that the present text was full of inconsistencies and discrepancies. No account was given of who Cain's wife could have been since the only people named who were in the world then were Adam, Eve and Cain (after he killed his brother). Yet he went off and got married. The story of a universal flood was preposterous. Various books are mentioned that are included in the present Scriptures. From ransacking all the discordances he could find, La Peyrère offered the theory that Moses probably made a diary, and part of the account in the Bible is taken from this and has become muddled and muddled in transmission from ancient times to the present.²⁷ He declared, "I need not trouble the Reader much further to prove a thing in itself sufficiently evident, that the first five books of the Bible were not written by Moses, as is thought. Nor need any one wonder after this, when he reads many things confus'd and out of order, obscure, deficient, many things omitted and misplaced, when they shall consider with themselves that they are a heap of Copie, confusedly taken."²⁸ Nonetheless La Peyrère did not deny that Scripture, when properly reconstructed, contained all-important religious knowledge.²⁹

It was the reading of Hobbes and La Peyrère by young Spinoza that transformed the historical, critical and philological research into a scepticism about religion. Spinoza owned a copy of La Peyrère's *Prae-Adamitae*, and apparently knew of its shocking theses by the time of his excommunication.³⁰ He may have met the author who

²⁶ On Ibn Ezra, see W. Bacher, "Ibn Ezra, Abraham ben Meir (Aben Ezra)", *The Jewish Encyclopedia*, Vol. VI, pp. 520-524.

²⁷ Popkin, *La Peyrère*, chap. vi.

²⁸ La Peyrère, *Men before Adam*, Book IV, chap. 1, p. 208.

²⁹ La Peyrère was a Messianist, who saw the proper reading of Scripture as prophesying his view that the Jewish Messiah would soon arrive, and with the King of France, would lead the Jews back to the Holy Land, rebuild the Temple, and then He and the King of France would rule the Messianic world, and everyone would be happy. Cf. Popkin, *La Peyrère*, chap. v.

³⁰ Popkin, *La Peyrère*, pp. 83-84.

spent six months in Amsterdam in 1655, and who was in contact with Menasseh ben Israel, the best known teacher in Spinoza's school.³¹ Spinoza knew Samuel Fisher, who was active in the Quaker mission in Amsterdam in 1657-58.³² And Spinoza read Hobbes before he formulated his views in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.³³

It seems, from recently discovered information, that Spinoza began to become a religious sceptic in the months before his excommunication. He and two others were accused of teaching young Jewish students that there were inconsistencies in the Bible, some parts were probably mythic.³⁴ They offered some of La Peyrère's evidence that the Bible was not the history of all mankind.³⁵ Spinoza appears to have moved quickly out of the world that took the Bible as the source of supernatural knowledge. In the *Tractatus*, the Bible was seen as a collection of the views and writings of the early Hebrews, to be understood in the context of those times. Moses was portrayed as a political leader who found the Israelites wandering after they left Egypt, in a state of nature. They were no longer subject to Egyptian law, and had no laws of their own. Moses gave them a legal system, and made them accept it by clothing it in religious garb. The role of Moses became instructive in understanding how a theocracy developed in ancient times, and perhaps as an object lesson to avoid such a development in modern times.³⁶ Spinoza developed at great length the problems of determining who were the authors of the Biblical documents, and whether we possess any accurate text. The problems raised by Fisher and La Peyrère were explored in depth.³⁷

³¹ Popkin, *La Peyrère*, p. 84, and "Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac La Peyrère", *Studia Rosenthaliana* VIII (1974), pp. 59-63, and "Menasseh ben Israel and La Peyrère II", *Studia Rosenthaliana* XVIII (1984), pp. 12-20.

³² Popkin, "Spinoza's Relations with the Quakers," *Quaker History* LXXIII (1984), pp. 14-28, and *Spinoza's Earliest Publication? The Hebrew Translation of Margaret Fell's Loving Salutation*, ed. by R.H. Popkin and Michael J. Signer (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987), pp. 1-15.

³³ Spinoza's theory of how political societies get formed is obviously worked out on the basis of what Hobbes had previously said on the subject.

³⁴ Israel S. Révah, "Aux Origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents sur l'incroyance dans la communauté judéo-portugaise d'Amsterdam à l'époque de l'excommunication de Spinoza", *Revue des Études Juives* CXXIII (1964), pp. 357-431.

³⁵ Popkin, *History of Scepticism*, pp. 227-228.

³⁶ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, chaps. iii, v and xvii. Spinoza may well have had in mind Peter Cunaeus, *De Republica Hebraeorum*, Libri III, 1631, and many editions thereafter in Dutch and English as well as Latin.

³⁷ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, chaps. vii-xii.

Spinoza's work caused a great shock—the author had denied the supernatural character of the Bible, and had done this, in part, by denying that Moses was the author. Following immediately after Spinoza, Father Richard Simon offered a “defense” of Scripture as an inspired document, a defense which was taken as the coup de grace of revealed religion. Simon, the greatest scholar of Biblical manuscripts, early Jewish history and early Church history of his times, claimed he was fighting Calvinism while offering a way of avoiding Spinoza's conclusion.³⁸

Simon's Bible criticism, developed from La Peyrère's and Spinoza's, showed that if the Calvinists sought to use Scripture as the rule of faith, they had first to find an accurate text of Scripture. Knowing far more than La Peyrère or Spinoza about the sources of present texts, Simon cast doubt on any of them as being *the* correct text. He showed that the problem of getting back to the original text was extremely difficult if not impossible because of the epistemological problems involved in discovering the past.³⁹

On the other hand Simon insisted that the facts that Moses was not the author of all of the text, that other people added and subtracted from the text, did not preclude the text from being inspired, if all the authors were inspired. Hence one did not have to draw Spinoza's conclusion that the Bible was just a man-made document, but one did have to realize that it was difficult, if not impossible, to find the inspired document.⁴⁰

By the time that the critiques of Spinoza and Simon spread across Europe, it could be seen that the denial of the Mosaic authorship uncoupled the Biblical text from guaranteed religious knowledge. Before 17th-century Bible scholarship, it was taken for granted that the Bible contained God's message to mankind, and that most of the first part of the message passed from God to Moses to Scripture. Moses's contact with God provided the security for the text. People looking back could say: if Moses were not the author, then it is possible that the message is spurious or doubtful. As Tom Paine said at the end of the 18th century, “Take away from Genesis the belief that Moses was the author, on which only the strange belief that it is the word of God has stood, and there remains nothing of *Genesis*, but an anonymous book of stories, fables, and traditionary or invented absurdities or down-

³⁸ On Simon, see Jean Steinmann, *Richard Simon et les origines de l'exégèse biblique* (Paris: Desclée, 1960).

³⁹ All of this is developed in Richard Simon, *A Critical History of the Old Testament* (London, 1682).

⁴⁰ Simon, “Preface”, *Critical History of the Old Testament*.

right lies."⁴¹ The defenders of religion could see the steps by which the privileged status of Scripture was eroded. La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon may have taken the critical giant steps, but Hobbes had taken the first short step, by asserting that Moses did not write certain lines. He did not say they were inauthentic, or should be discarded. He just said they were not Mosaic. Later exegetes saw the casting of doubt on even one line as leading to infecting all the rest: "if any part is once proved spurious, a door will be opened for another and another without end".⁴² The scepticism about the Judeo-Christian religion that developed in the 17th and 18th centuries grew out of such central issues as the denial of the Mosaic authorship. Hobbes, whether intentionally or not (and, I for one, see no reason to doubt his claim that he accepted Christianity, as expressed by the Church of England), gave impetus to the powerful religious scepticism of the Bible critics. La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon may have been more important, and more sceptical. However Hobbes' modest contribution took on great significance in view of what they said after him, and he got to be labelled a religious sceptic in the way that they did. The attacks on Hobbes on this score, especially in England, reflected the influence of deism, Spinozism as well as Hobbism in the Restoration period. Hobbes to some extent became inseparable from Spinoza and the later Bible critics.⁴³

Another way in which Hobbes was attacked as a religious sceptic, was to claim that he and Spinoza sought to give a naturalistic psychological and political explanation of how religions develop. Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, had offered an account of how pagan religions developed.⁴⁴ He specifically exempted revealed religions, Judaism and Christianity, from his investigation, as Machiavelli and Charron had done before him.⁴⁵ Others of his times were vitally interested in explaining the development of polytheistic religions ancient and modern. Perhaps the two most important such efforts, Gerard Vossius, *On the Origins of*

⁴¹ Tom Paine, *The Age of Reason, Part the Second being an Investigation of True and Fabulous Theology* (London, 1795), p. 14.

⁴² David Levi, *Letters to Dr. Priestley in Answer to his Letters to the Jews, Part II, occasioned by Mr. David Levi's Reply to the Former Part* (London, 1789), pp. 14-15.

⁴³ Mintz, *op. cit.*; and Rosalie L. Colie, *Light and Enlightenment. A Study of the Cambridge Platonists and the Dutch Arminians* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1957), chaps. iv-vi.

⁴⁴ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. 12.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

Idolatry, 1648,⁴⁶ and Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe*, 1678,⁴⁷ indicate what was at stake. Vossius offered the theory that all polytheistic religions were derivative from, and represented degenerative forms of the basic revealed religion—Judeo-Christianity. The degenerations from True Religion were due to all sorts of factors including psychological, social and political ones.⁴⁸ By making a taxonomy of the kinds of polytheisms, one could trace back through them to the Mosaic Revelation and the *prisca* theology. Cudworth leaned heavily on Vossius's account, and differed in some details. Both of them, and then Isaac Newton as well, were incorporating all of the humanistic data and explorer information about polytheism into a "defense" of Judeo-Christianity, the original revelation.⁴⁹ In contrast, Hobbes was offering an account of pagan religions apart from any connection with Biblical religion. He and Machiavelli stated what they were doing so that it did not conflict with taking Biblical religion as revealed. Spinoza however took over the psychological and political method of explaining religions, and applied it to all cases, including Judaism and Christianity.

Cudworth, writing just after the appearance of Spinoza's *Tractatus* in 1670, saw Hobbes and Spinoza jointly as posing a great sceptical danger to religion. Cudworth portrayed the Hobbes-Spinoza method of explaining religion as the most dangerous kind of atheism.⁵⁰

It is interesting and curious that this aspect of Hobbes's view seems to have been co-opted into the clandestine irreligious theory almost as soon as it appeared. In 1656, Henry Oldenburg reported from Oxford that "religion falls into contempt, the raillery of the profane grows sharper, and the hearts of those who fear God are crucified". This Oldenburg told his correspondent, Adam Boreel, the leader of the Dutch Collegiants (the spiritual group Spinoza joined after his excommunication).⁵¹ Then as examples, Oldenburg described two problems that were recently mentioned. The first is the contention that "the whole of the story of Creation seems to have been composed

⁴⁶ Gerard J. Vossius, *De theologia gentili et physiologia Christiana: sive de origine ac progressu idolatriae ad veterum gesta, ac rerum naturam, reductae; deque naturae mirandis, quibus homo adducitur ad deum* (Amsterdam, 1641).

⁴⁷ Ralph Cudworth, *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (London, 1678).

⁴⁸ Vossius, *Theologia gentili*, Books I and II.

⁴⁹ Cf. R. H. Popkin, "Vossius, Cudworth and Newton", in J. E. Force and Popkin, *Essays on Newton's Theology* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1990).

⁵⁰ Cudworth, *True Intellectual System*, pp. 690-706.

⁵¹ Henry Oldenburg, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg* (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), Vol. I, pp. 89-90

in order to introduce the Sabbath, and that from motives of merely political prudence." Moses, it is claimed, concocted the whole story on purpose, and got people to worship the invisible Deity. Moses supposedly "encouraged and excited his people to obey him" so that much booty could be collected in war.⁵² Christ, being more prudent than Moses, enticed his people by the hope of eternal life and happiness⁵³ ... "But Mohammed, cunning in all things, enlisted all men with the good things of this world as well as of the next, and so became their master, and extended the limits of his empire much more widely than did any legislator before or after him."⁵⁴ Oldenburg was shocked by this political interpretation of the roles of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed, and begged his friend, Boreel, to write a refutation in order to save religion⁵⁵, which he did over the next five years. It was never published, but a copy exists in the Boyle papers at the Royal Society, and Henry More used another copy.⁵⁶

Hobbes, of course, never discussed Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed in this way. The points mentioned in Oldenburg's letter appear in the underground work, *Les Trois Imposteurs, ou l'Esprit de M. Spinoza*, only published in 1719, but written some time earlier. There are many, many manuscripts in libraries in Europe and North America, written probably from 1690 afterwards by parties unknown.⁵⁷ Every known manuscript uses material from *Leviathan* and from Spinoza's *Ethics*.⁵⁸ There were rumors that the work existed in the 1650s. Queen Christina of Sweden offered \$1,000,000 for a copy, and that may have inspired someone to write it.⁵⁹ Nobody knew what was in it besides the claim that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were im-

⁵² *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 91-92.

⁵⁶ Boyle Papers, Vols. 12, 13 and 15 at the Royal Society of England. Henry More mentioned having access to a copy in the preface to his *Theological Works*, (London 1708), pp. iv-v. He apparently obtained it from Francis van Helmont, at the home of Lady Anne Conway.

⁵⁷ On *Les Trois Imposteurs*, see R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza and *Les Trois Imposteurs*," *Proceedings of the International Spinoza Congress, Chicago 1987*, edited by E. M. Curley (Leiden: Brill, 1991).

⁵⁸ Cf. Silvia Berti, "La Vie et l'esprit de Spinoza' (1719) e la prima tradizione francese dell'*Ethica*", *Rivista Storica Italiana*, XCVIII (1986), pp. 7-46; and Bert-ram E. Schwarzbach and A. W. Fairbairn, "Sur les rapports entre les editions du 'Traité des trois imposteurs' et la traduction manuscrite de cet ouvrage", *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres II* (1987), pp. 111-136.

⁵⁹ See Sven Stolpe, *Christina of Sweden* (New York: Macmillan, 1966), p. 130.

posters. The first indication of the contents appears in this letter of Oldenburg's *and* almost the same sentences appear in the later manuscripts. So, some preliminary form of the counter-claim to the Judeo-Christianity-Islamic religions existed by 1656, and became known to Oldenburg at Oxford.

A curious fact that may have some relation to the above is that the radical Independent thinker, Henry Stubbe, was at Oxford at the time, translating Hobbes' *Leviathan*. He was in correspondence with Hobbes, who was in London. It would be exciting to find a link between Stubbe's activities and the ideas reported by Oldenburg. The study of Stubbe by James Jacob suggests that he was a very avant-garde thinker who hid his real views. So far, one can only speculate that Stubbe's knowledge of Hobbes's theory was somehow mixed with the three-imposter theory, either by Stubbe himself, or somebody he was in contact with at Oxford.⁶⁰ (Another loose end that may have some relevance here is that someone, as yet unknown, translated La Peyrère's *Prae-Adamitae* into English in 1656, and published it.)⁶¹

In fact features of the three imposters theory go way back. The Jewish medieval life of Jesus, the Jewish and Christian explanations of Mohammed, and various secret irreligious or atheist sentiments, all contain bits and pieces. What was lacking to construct a counter-theory was an explanation of the dynamics of the formation of religions to go along with the scurrilous accounts of the motivations and actions of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed. Hobbes's account of pagan religion, and Spinoza's account of all religion, provided the framework for a complete denial of Judaism and Christianity, and for a thoroughgoing religious scepticism. But there is nothing to indicate that Hobbes wanted his view about pagan religion to be used to construct a complete religious scepticism. Cudworth, who was an active intellectual from the 40s onward, saw the Hobbes-Spinoza political interpretation as extremely dangerous. Cudworth conceded, possibly from his own experience with the Cromwell government and the Restoration one, that politicians "may sometimes abuse Religion and make it serve for the promotings of their own private Interests and

⁶⁰ Cf. James R. Jacob, *Henry Stubbe, Radical Protestantism and the Early Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

⁶¹ The book comes with no indication of the circumstances of the translation or the publication. The author was briefly in London in 1653, and may have made some contacts which led to the publication. He seems to have been in contact then, and later by correspondence, with Jean-Baptiste Stoupe, a French Reformed minister who was an agent of Cromwell's and later became an officer in the Prince of Condé's army.

Designs.”⁶² But no matter what politicians might do, “it is not conceivable, how *Civil Sovereigns* throughout the whole World, some of which are so distant, and have so little Correspondence with one another, should notwithstanding all so well agree in this *One Cheating Mystery of Government*, or Piece of State Coozenage.”⁶³ Also, how could these politicians take in all of mankind by inducing fear, awe and dread “of a meer Counterfeit thing, and an *Invisible Nothing*” which has no basis in sense or reason.⁶⁴ If religion is a fraud, is it not strange that in the whole history of the world, nobody should have “suggested or discovered this *Cheat* and Juggle of Politicians, and have Smelt out a *Plot* upon themselves in the Fiction of Religion to take away their Liberty and entral them under Bondage”.⁶⁵ All sorts of impostures have been uncovered. Atheists have been telling people for two thousand years “that Religion is nothing but a meer *State Juggle*, and *Political Imposture*”, but this has not convinced anyone.⁶⁶ Cudworth then argued that religion is “deeply rooted in the *Intellectual Nature* of man”. Theistic religion is no fraud or imposture since all mankind agree in acknowledging a Supreme Deity, an eternal and necessary Being.

Rather than trying to exempt just Judaism and Christianity from the political explanation, Cudworth sought to show that theistic religion in general was what all people really believed, even avowed atheists. And, since according to Vossius and Cudworth, all theistic religion is derivative from the basic revealed religion, then the *Ur-Religion* revealed to Moses cannot be a political invention. Everyone knows the idea of God, of an absolutely perfect being. The atheists who deny theism have to have a meaningful idea of what they are denying. “Were there no God, the Idea of an *Absolutely* or *Infinitely Perfect Being* could never have been *Made* or *Feigned* neither by Politicians, nor by Poets, nor Philosophers.”⁶⁷ Then Cudworth contended that nobody had any political interest in foisting Christianity on the world, and its supernatural status is shown by the prophecies in its Scriptures that have been and are being fulfilled. “And thus, do we see plainly, that the *Scripture-Prophecies* Evince a Deity; neither can these possibly be imputed by Atheists as another thing, to mens *Fear* and *Fancy*, nor yet to the *Fiction of Politicians*.”

⁶² Cudworth, *op. cit.*, p. 691.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 692.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 697.

They confirm Christianity also by the prediction of its reception."⁶⁸ So much for Cudworth's answer.

Two of the central features of religious scepticism, the denial of the Mosaic authorship, and the political and psychological explanation of religion were firmly attributed to Hobbes by the latter part of the 17th century. As I have tried to show, he stated a quite modest version of each, easily compatible with the acceptance of Judaism or Christianity. And unless one reads between the lines, as Leo Strauss did, there seems no reason to suspect he held more sweeping views. The further development of these themes in La Peyrère, Spinoza and Simon, led opponents of theirs to see and interpret Hobbes as holding their views, and as being the founder or inspirer of the complete doubt or denial of the revealed knowledge claims of Judaism and Christianity. His political explanation of pagan religion was taken by opponents like Cudworth as applying to all religions, and as being indistinguishable from Spinoza's naturalistic account in which all religions became man-made.

Hobbes may have held the views of his successors, but he did not say so. He lived long after the scandal caused by the appearance of La Peyrère's *Men before Adam* with its picture of the state of nature *before* Adam, but Hobbes apparently did not adopt this view as an explanation of when chronologically men could have been in their natural state.⁶⁹ He lived for several years after Spinoza's views shocked thinkers in England and elsewhere (Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, Bishop Edward Stillingfleet all wrote strong answers), and he did not embrace Spinoza as his successor. The youthful English Deist, Charles Blount, tried to enlist Hobbes as an advocate of natural religion, but apparently got no response.⁷⁰ Blount also tried to enlist Hobbes, posthumously, as a follower of Pyrrho and Sextus Empiricus.⁷¹

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 714.

⁶⁹ Hobbes was attacked by Sir Robert Filmer in *Observations concerning the Originall of Government*, (1652), about the possibility of a state of nature existing after God created Adam. John Bramhall, Bishop of Derry, raised much the same point in *The Catching of the Leviathan, or the Great Whale* (1658). On these works, see John Bowle, *Hobbes and his Critics* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1951).

⁷⁰ Charles Blount, "For Mr. Hobbs, to be left with Mr. Crook, a Bookseller, at the Sign of the Green Dragon without Temple-Bar, near St. Clement's Church", Ludgate-Hill, 1678", in *The Miscellaneous Works of Charles Blount, Esq.* (s.l., 1695), pp. 97-105.

⁷¹ Blount, *Oracles of Reason*, p. 93. "It was the common sence of the wisest Philosophers, that things were good antecedent to all human Compacts, and this

Hobbes had ample opportunity to enter the growing discussion about the authenticity and accuracy of Scripture, and about whether Christianity is just a form of natural religion, but avoided comment. Some have seen hints here and there that he secretly sided with the avant-garde sceptics about traditional religions. But, in the absence of more overt data, I think we have to leave him as holding slightly innovative views about the Biblical text and the development of religions, views that were and are compatible with official versions of Christianity of established churches. In saying all of this, I am not saying Hobbes was a believer, rather that he could have been an honest adherent of the Church of England. He certainly lacks the believer's fervor of his contemporary, Pascal. But his concern with religion was great, considering how much of his text is devoted to it.

One can say that this is due to the political importance of religion in Hobbes's time. The Thirty Years War, the Puritan Revolution and the Restoration were the dominant events of Hobbes's lifetime. His own career was the effect of these. And, like many other thoughtful people, he was seeking a resolution to the social strife caused by the religious wars and conflicts. And it is in Hobbes's discussion of how this can be done that I think one finds signs of another kind of scepticism that has had far-reaching consequences in the last three centuries.

John Watkins said that Hobbes was an ethical sceptic because he held that there is no absolute or independent criterion of moral truth except in political terms.⁷² In *De Cive*, Hobbes had asserted, "Before there was any government, *just* and *unjust* had no being, then nature only being relative to some command, and every action in its own nature is indifferent, that it becomes *just* or *unjust*, proceeds from the right of the magistrate."⁷³ As Watkins pointed out, Hobbes explained that this is not due to the sovereign possessing some special or higher moral knowledge so that his laws are just. And the same is the case with regard to the interpretations of theology offered by the sovereign. The sovereign has no special superior religious knowledge, but his views are authoritative.⁷⁴

In the areas of religion and morals, Hobbes had contended that there is no way people can decide between competing claims. There

opinion, *Pyrrho* in *Sextus Empiricus* argues against, also Mr. *Hobbes* hath of late revived in the world *Pyrrho's* Doctrine."

⁷² John W. N. Watkins, *Hobbes' System of Ideas* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), pp. 110 and 129-131.

⁷³ Hobbes, *De Cive*, in *English Works*, Vol. XIII, p. 151.

⁷⁴ Watkins, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

is no rational criterion of knowledge in these kinds of cases. However, it is necessary for social reasons that decisions be made about moral and religious conduct. The sovereign makes the decision, which is arbitrary from any evidential point of view, and the decision is accepted by everyone as if it were true.

The scepticism involved here is partly an outcome of Hobbes's theory of names. Insofar as names are arbitrary, and knowledge is about names, there is no objective knowledge. Private names, individual marks for elements of one's experience, become more than subjective if they become part of a socially acceptable language. Without going into the lengthy discussions of reasoning as the relationship of names, and the intended significance of Hobbes's claim that "*true* and *false* are attributes of speech, not of things",⁷⁵ I will turn to another aspect that leads to an overt scepticism. Hobbes had said that theological and religious propositions, which are the results of naming, can have social consequences. These consequences can be very severe, appearing in the form of social conflicts, contests of force, on up to civil wars and international wars. What was happening in England and France, the wars between Protestant and Catholic countries, showed how great the social disturbance could be. And, the consequences of moral disagreements are seen all the time in quarrels, crimes, etc. The social disorder brought about by these disagreements in religion and morals is so devisive and so destructive of the public peace, that there is an overriding practical reason why these disagreements have to be resolved, even if they cannot be resolved by means of evidence and reasoning. So, it becomes a political problem to eliminate these conflicts. The sovereign decrees a solution. His solution is not based on knowledge of what is right and good. It is the solution and defines what is right and good.

If Hobbes had restricted the need for political solutions to moral and religious questions, this might have been acceptable, especially in view of the conflicts of his time. But, I shall indicate, Hobbes, at least clearly in one place, and by inference elsewhere, extended this to scientific and mathematical views, in so far as disagreements in these areas could also be disturbing to the public peace. Hobbes's own cantankerous quarrels with the mathematicians, with other philosophers and scientists, must have made him aware of what social disharmony could result from intellectual disagreements.⁷⁶ In *De Cive* there is

⁷⁵ Hobbes, *Leviathan*, Part I, sec. 4, p. 23, in *English Works*, Vol. III.

⁷⁶ Hobbes, *Six Lessons to the Savilian Professors of the Mathematics*, and *Marks of the Absurd Geometry etc. of Dr. Wallis*, in *English Works*, Vol. VII.

a passage where Hobbes indicated that even purely intellectual disagreements can affect the public peace, and that political means had to be used to eliminate these differences, means like those used to settle religious and ethical disputes. This would seem to lead to a special kind of scepticism, a political scepticism, in which there are no intellectual standards of truth and falsity, only political ones. And these are to be evaluated on pragmatic standards—namely, do they work to preserve the civic order.

The passage in *De Cive* is part of a consideration by Hobbes of what happens if people disagree about definitions. The context indicates clearly that Hobbes was discussing all types of definitions, not just moral and religious ones. The text reads:

"It is needful therefore, as oft as any controversy ariseth in these matters contrary to the public good and common peace, that there be somebody to judge of the reasoning, that is to say, whether that which is inferred, be rightly inferred or not; that so the controversy may be ended. But there are no rules given by Christ to this purpose, neither came he into the world to teach *logic*. It remains therefore that the judges of such controversies, be the same with those whom God by nature had instituted before, namely, those who in each city are constituted by the sovereign. Moreover, if a controversy be raised of the accurate and proper signification, that is the definition of those names or appellations which are commonly used; insomuch as it is needful for the peace of the city, or the distribution of right to be determined; the determination will belong to the city. For men, by reasoning, do search out such kind of definitions in their observation of diverse conceptions, for the signification whereof those appellations were used at diverse times and for diverse causes. But the decision of the question, whether a man do reason rightly, belongs to the city[!sic]. For example, if a woman bring forth a child of unwonted shape, and the law forbid to kill a man; the question is whether the child be a man. It is demanded therefore, what a man is. No man doubts but the city shall judge it, and that without taking an account of Aristotle's definition that man is a rational creature. And these things, namely, *right*, *policy*, and *natural sciences*, are subjects concerning which Christ denies that it belongs to his office to give any precepts, or teach any thing beside this only, that in all controversies about them, every single subject should obey the laws and determinations of his city."⁷⁷

The quotation shows clearly that Hobbes was talking about scientific views as well as moral and religious ones. All were given their truth values by the political authorities. Hobbes, echoing François Veron, said Christ did not come into the world to teach logic. We learn natural laws, science and logic through natural reason. The human principles we adopt, and the conclusions we draw from them, are "subject to the censure of civil power". Whatever is not revealed, moral and political principles "and the examination of doctrines and books in all manner of rational science depends upon the *temporal*

⁷⁷ Hobbes, *De Cive*, chap. xvii, pp. 268-269.

right". The very distinction between what is spiritual and what is temporal has to be made by the temporal authorities "because our Saviour hath not made that distinction". The sovereign is thus "the supreme authority of judgment and determining all manner of controversies about *temporal matters*".⁷⁸

In a section a little later on, Hobbes pointed out that if people followed their own opinions, society would break up. There would be controversies that "should become innumerable and indeterminable".⁷⁹ Hobbes had begun his discussion dealing with religious controversies, and then moved on to include scientific views, logical and mathematical ones. In all these areas, the civil authority had to settle what is true or false.

Richard Peters put special stress on the passage I quoted at length above. After spelling out that would mean that scientific disputes involving questions of public importance would have to be settled by political authorities, Peters called this a "bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth".⁸⁰ He said that Hobbes usually stated it when he was trying to delimit the respective spheres of secular and ecclesiastical jurisdiction, or when he was concerned about the types of disputes that provoke civil unrest.

Ezequiel de Olaso, in his excellent article, "Thomas Hobbes y la recta razón", pointed out that in the early discussion in *De Cive* about the law of nature, and in the discussion of naming in *Leviathan*, Hobbes was suggesting this bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth.⁸¹ In a note on "Right reason", Hobbes first said in the natural state of men, right reason is not an infallible faculty, but is the act of reasoning of each individual, "the peculiar and true ratiocination of every man concerning those actions of his, which may either redound to the damage or benefit of his neighbors. I call it peculiar, because although in a civil government the reason of the supreme, that, the civil law, is to be received by each single subject for the right; yet being without this civil government, in which state no man can know right reason from false"⁸² except by comparing it with his own. In the state of nature, each man's reason is judged by itself, but without any objective standard. Because of the conflicts of each person's

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, sec. 27, p. 293.

⁸⁰ Richard Peters, *Hobbes* (Baltimore: Penguin, 1967), pp. 55-57.

⁸¹ Ezequiel de Olaso, "Thomas Hobbes y la recta razón", *Manuscrito* IV (1980-1981), pp. 29-35

⁸² Hobbes, *De Cive*, chap. II, sec. i, p. 16n. See also, *Leviathan*, Part I, chap. 4, pp. 21-29.

reason, and actions based on it, a social arbiter has to be introduced to determine what is right reason in a civic context.

In organized society, Hobbes saw that basic disagreements and conflicts arose over defining what is secular and what is religious, and over what is good and right. Individual right reason is not adequate to settle the problems, since there is no indubitable or satisfactory criterion for determining whose right reason to accept. But, to prevent the social disintegration that would ensue, political authority has to determine what is true in religion and morals. The bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth spills over into scientific, mathematical and logical questions as long as there are disagreements and social consequences of views in these areas.

Karl Marx turned the issue around by contending that the intellectual activities going on at any time are a reflection of the economic-political determining forces. There have been feudal idea-systems, there are capitalistic ones, and for Marx, there will be socialistic ones. Hence the political authorities will propound intellectual truths in all areas.⁸³

Whether one accepts Marx's claim, which I do not (perhaps a reflection of what authority decides my views), the social and political analysis of intellectual history has been illuminating, and perhaps most illuminating in the study of the history of science and the history of religion. The study of factors involved in the encouragement and endorsement of the "new science" of Hobbes's time point to political activities which made the new science acceptable and even desirable. On the other hand, the political attempts to silence non-Aristotelian science, by Church and state authorities in France, indicate that social-political factors, and not evidential ones, decided what was to be taught as true. On a grander scale, one can see the political factors involved in deciding what science should be taught, what should be financed, who should know how AIDS is contracted and so on. The decision about what departments of universities should be closed down and which created also clearly involves some political-social factors. In the history of religion one can also see political forces guiding some religious developments, crushing others, for social reasons. In the United States, the state, through the courts, has to decide what is a religion, and for political reasons to prevent the promulgation of any religion in the schools. In England with an established Church, the political authority is involved in Church decisions, and even in determining who runs the Church.

⁸³ See Karl Marx, "Author's preface" to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*.

One can accept the findings of the social-political historians, and yet ask, does this throw any light on whether Galileo's or Luther's views were true? Does the fact that political authorities for centuries encouraged Christian religious groups to convert the Jews show that Christianity is right and Judaism wrong? One can offer a Hobbesian account of the divisive implications of Galileo's views, the social discord they produced, and justify what happened. Similarly one can examine the social disruption caused by assertions and denials that the Messiah has come, and the reasons why a state might take action to stop the disruption. But one can still ask which views are true.

I think Hobbes, in the statement of his political scepticism, eroded the independent place for the so-called objective inquirer to stand. Since truth is a function of the relation of names, and naming is a social activity with potential for producing discord, the 'truth'-question easily moves from an epistemological to a political one, at least as soon as any social disruption occurs. The ivory-tower theorist, who tries to brush aside the fact that some people get upset by sub-atomic physics, space research, interpretations of books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*, and by the movie *The Last Temptation of Christ*, is taking a social stance that can lead to dispute, rock-throwing, pamphleteering, annoying letters to *The Times*, or *The New York Review of Books*, and so quickly require a political decision—whether to protect the "pure" theorist, whether to declare him or her redundant, whether to inhibit her or his publications, and so on.

In Hobbes's world, since resolving social strife is the standard, then *all* intellectual views become subject to the bizarre and authoritarian theory of truth, if they have any social reverberations. The analysis of Richard Tuck may lead to this same result. Self-preservation is basic, but can one tell what helps self-preservation? Since this leads to conflict and doubt, then the state has to decide.⁸⁴

One should suspend judgment on all knowledge-claims of any import, until they have been vetted politically. This, I suggest, constitutes a radical kind of scepticism, much different from that of Hobbes's French and English contemporaries. The Spanish and Portuguese Inquisition then, and the modern totalitarian states have managed to create situations where intellectuals have adopted this kind of political scepticism. And, unfortunately, modern means of persuasion have enabled nasty states to force people to accept various views about science, politics, history, and also forced them to believe them.

⁸⁴ Richard Tuck, "The 'Modern' Theory of Natural Law", in Pagden, *The Language of Political Theory*, p. 110.

Political scepticism is part of what we all confront in modern world. In seeing how it arises out of Hobbes's analysis, and out of the state's power to control disruptive people, at least we can gain some insight into what we have to operate with. We may want to be free, independent thinkers, making our own intellectual decisions which we think are true. Since we do this in society, to what extent is our free independent thinking limited by social concerns, and to what extent to we have to accept various political definitions of truth? And even the answer may reflect the extent to which we have been conditioned socially and brain-washed politically. Hence, as Pilate asked: What is Truth?

III

CONDORCET, ABOLITIONIST*

Marie Jean Antoine Nicolas Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-1794) was not only a very important mathematician, philosopher, and social scientist, but also one of the leading humanitarians of the latter part of the eighteenth century, fighting for causes, some of which are just succeeding in our own time. Condorcet was one of the first modern advocates of women's rights and equality. He also struggled for the rights of Protestants in Catholic France (though he did not seem to be particularly concerned about the rights of Jews, which became a significant issue in the last years of Condorcet's career). He was about the only public advocate of social rights for homosexuals and prostitutes, as long as they did not engage in physical violence against unwilling persons. In addition, and what is crucial for this study, Condorcet was one of the strongest advocates of his day in France for the abolition of African slavery, first in French colonies like Saint-Domingue, and next throughout the world.¹

Of all the *philosophes*, Condorcet alone came out unequivocally against almost all forms of discrimination. As he put it near the start of his *On the Admission of Women to Voting Rights* (1790), "he who votes against the right of another, whatever be his religion, color, or sex, has from that moment on adjured his own rights". Condorcet was the most important Enlightenment figure to live on to the Revolution. He could therefore try to implement the abstract radical solutions that he had developed out of discussions with the other famous Enlightenment figures, in the new political arena that developed after 1789.

Condorcet's interest in radical reform concerning slavery seems to have been greatly influenced both by British abolitionists and by events in America. He was a fellow Masonic lodge member with Benjamin Franklin,² and he knew Thomas Jefferson well. He also read the Abbé Raynal's account of the Revolution in America and the

* I wish to thank Leonora Cohen Rosenfield for her assistance in this paper, especially in bringing my attention to some unpublished or little-known material concerning Condorcet's views on the abolition of slavery.

¹ See J. Salvyn Schapiro, *Condorcet and the Rise of Liberalism* (New York, 1934).

² *Ibid.*, pp. 79 and 218.

controversy surrounding it.³ One of the strongest and earliest statements of his abolitionist views is in his "Remarques sur les pensées de Pascal", from Condorcet's edition of Pascal of 1776.⁴ In discussing the misery of men, Condorcet devoted four pages to the situation of the blacks. He spoke of "slavery, that horrible violation of human rights". He demanded the abolition of slavery in a letter of June 7, 1777 to the *Journal de Paris*. His *La Vie de M. Turgot* (1786) called the slave trade "cet infame trafic". Only an entente among all the European countries could stop the slave trade, he pointed out in an unpublished manuscript now at the Bibliothèque de l'Institut. His best known statement of his position on slavery, and his proposed solution to the problems appears in his *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des Nègres*, dated 1785.⁵ He made several further statements, one in his address on election to the French Academy in 1782, another after he joined the Société des Amis des Noirs in 1788, then when he was its president and principal spokesman. A circular letter of his to all the bailiwicks of France as they were preparing to vote for delegates to the Estates General urged them to demand the destruction of the slave trade and preparations for the ultimate abolition of slavery. (*Au corps électoral contre l'esclavage des nègres*, 4 février, 1789). The next month, as one of the electors of the nobility from Mantes, he was able to insert in their *cahier* a recommendation to the Estates-General to "examine the means of destroying the slave trade and preparing for the destruction of black slavery".⁶ Later, as a member of the revolutionary assembly, he advocated bills to eliminate slavery in the French colonies.⁷ Condorcet continued his activities as a polemicist for the liberation of slaves, as a politician trying to bring that about, until he had to flee in 1793 for opposing the Jacobin proposal for a new constitution. (In the nine months that he was in hiding before he was caught and died, he wrote the final version of his most famous work, *Sketch of a Historical Tableau on the Progress of the Human Mind*, in

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 219-22.

⁴ Reprinted in Condorcet, *Oeuvres de Condorcet*, ed. Arthur C. O'Connor and Marie F. Arago, 12 vols. (Paris, 1847-49), Vol. 3, pp. 635-62.

⁵ Condorcet, *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des Nègres*, in *Collection des Principaux Economistes française* (Paris, 1847), Vol. 14, pp. 505-43.

⁶ *Archives parlementaires*, Art. 7, pp. 662, cited in Léon Cahen, *Condorcet et la révolution française* (Paris, 1904), p. 112.

⁷ See Keith M. Baker, "Condorcet's notes for a revised edition of his reception speech to the Académie française", *Voltaire Studies*, Vol. 169 (1977), esp. p. 23; and Léon Cahen, "La Société des Amis des Noirs et Condorcet", *La Révolution française* 50 (1906), pp. 481-511, where some of Condorcet's statements about slavery are included.

which he again attacked slavery.)⁸ Condorcet's unfortunate need to hide prevented him from taking part in the crucial events in France's march toward abolition of slavery—the rebellion in Saint-Domingue, the establishment of Haiti, the first black republic, the French acceptance of Haiti, and the final outlawing of slavery. Condorcet's place as the leading advocate of the blacks was taken over by the great egalitarian, the abbé Henri Grégoire.

What I shall deal with in this study is first the examination of Condorcet's view about the slavery of Africans. His reasons for condemning slavery will be considered, as well as his program for abolishing slavery. This then will be treated in terms of the American context in which Condorcet saw it. Briefly, I will then touch on the similarities and differences in the views of Condorcet and of Thomas Jefferson. Lastly, I shall look at how Condorcet's views compare with those of his successor as 'chief abolitionist' of France, the abbé Grégoire.

Condorcet's major statement of his objections to African slavery, the *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des Nègres* of 1781, was published pseudonymously, with the work attributed to a pastor, one Joachim Schwartz. (He used this name also in his unpublished essay of 1776.)⁹ In the dedicatory epistle of the Negro slaves, Condorcet-Schwartz began by insisting that he and all other whites and slaves had the same "esprit, the same reason and the same virtue".¹⁰ Then, as the body of the writing begins, "To reduce a man to slavery, to buy him, to sell

⁸ Condorcet, *Sketch of a Historical Tableau on the Progress of the Human Mind*, trans. June Barraclough (New York, 1955), Eighth Epoch, p. 114.

⁹ See Cahen, "La Société des Amis des Noirs et Condorcet", pp. 498-503.

¹⁰ Condorcet, *Réflexions*, p. 502. A postscript follows the twelve chapters. Their titles are instructive:

"1. De l'injustice de l'esclavage des nègres, considérée par rapport à leurs maîtres.

"2. Raisons dont on sert pour excuser l'esclavage des nègres. .

"3. De la prétendue nécessité de l'esclavage des nègres, considérée par rapport au droit qui peut en résulter pour leurs maîtres.

"4. Si un homme peut acheter un autre homme de lui-même.

"5. De l'injustice de l'esclavage des nègres, considérée par rapport au législateur.

"6. Les colonies à sucre et à indigo ne peuvent-elles être cultivées que par les nègres esclaves?

"7. Qu'il faut détruire l'esclavage des nègres et que leurs maîtres ne peuvent exiger aucun dédommagement.

"8. Examen des raisons que peuvent empêcher la puissance législative des Etats où l'esclavage des noirs est toléré, de remplir, par une loi d'affranchissement général, le devoir de justice qui l'oblige à leur rendre la liberté.

"9. Des moyens de détruire l'esclavage des nègres par degrés.

"10. Sur les projets pour adoucir l'esclavage des nègres.

"11. De la culture après la destruction de l'esclavage.

"12. Réponse à quelques raisonnements des partisans de l'esclavage".

him, to keep him in servitude, all these are real crimes, and crimes that are worse than stealing". The slave is not only deprived of his property, but of the very means of acquiring any. He is also deprived of the control of any of the faculties that have been given him for preserving his life, or satisfying his needs; or, of controlling his own being. Even if the crime of slavery were approved by public opinion and by laws; even if "the human race by unanimous vote approved, the crime would still remain a crime". Condorcet pointed out that "les moralistes" are silent about the crime involved in reducing men to slavery.¹¹

It is often claimed that the Africans benefit from being made slaves. It is said that those who are enslaved are either condemned criminals about to die, or prisoners of war who would be killed if they were not bought by Europeans. So, it is made to appear that the enslavement of blacks is a humanitarian act. To this Condorcet expressed great disbelief. Is it possible, he asked, that before the Europeans arrived, each African tribe killed all their prisoners of war? Isn't it more plausible that the fighting tribes exchanged prisoners after a while? The only evidence offered to the contrary comes from those engaged in the slave trade. And, besides, even if we suppose that the life of an African is saved by his being bought, is it not the case that one crime is being substituted for another? The African is saved from one situation only to be dragooned into another totally unjustified and immoral one. In addition, one has to consider that the European slave dealers are aiding and abetting the African tribal wars (and sometimes fomenting them) so that there will be a continuous source of supply of prisoners of war to be purchased.¹²

Next, Condorcet pointed out that the excuse offered by the European buyer of slaves in Africa does not provide any justification for the colonist who buys the slaves in America. He is not rescuing the poor slave from any threat of death. And this excuse has even less applicability to the blacks on the plantations who are born into slavery.¹³

Enslaving criminals who are legitimately condemned is not itself legitimate, since for a punishment to be just, it must be determined by law as to its duration and as to its form. Punishing someone by making him someone's slave does not make the penalty precise, since the master can do what he likes with the slave. Then Condorcet

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 505.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 506-07.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pp. 506-07.

added, bringing this back to his subject, who can believe that Africa actually had so many criminals?¹⁴

It is claimed that the colonies cannot be developed without black slaves. Even if this is true, Condorcet said, it does not make slavery legitimate. Why do people have to make a fortune in the colonies? Why do they have to commit a crime to do it? To get to the heart of the matter, can people buy other people? If someone offers to sell himself to me, he cannot in so doing sell me his descendants. Everyone, Condorcet insisted, is born free. In just about all of his statements opposing slavery he maintained that freedom is a natural right that cannot legitimately be taken away. A person can sell his services, even for life, but he cannot be made a slave. The sale contract would give each party rights in the matter. Thus, the person who sold himself would still retain his natural rights. The contract could be abrogated under various conditions, and the person would regain his or her freedom. Hence, "There is then no case in which slavery, even voluntarily entered into, is not contrary to natural rights". (Condorcet here cited Rousseau's *Contrat social* as his authority for this claim.)¹⁵

Having argued his general philosophical theses (1) that liberty and the rights of men are everywhere the same regardless of the color or nationality of the persons involved, and (2) that a crime is always a crime regardless of what else is happening, Condorcet then went on to deal with the practical considerations involved with slavery, especially the economic ones. The claim was being made by French, English and Dutch colonists in the Caribbean that sugar and indigo cannot be cultivated without Negro slaves. But has this been proven? The way the white colonists live makes them incapable of doing the work. The work habits of the whites and the blacks develop from the economy of the islands, and are not the cause of it. Condorcet also claimed that the actual production of sugar and indigo would probably increase if carried on by free labor. If the blacks were free they would become a flourishing nation. They are now burdened with the vices of their corrupters, but they are naturally a gentle (*doux*) people who are industrious and sensitive.¹⁶

From this it follows, according to Condorcet, that slavery has to be destroyed. Condorcet, who was a great mathematician, frequently claimed that arguing against defenses of slavery was like arguing against those who believe $2+2=5$, or those who believe they can square the circle. All three views can be logically demolished, but

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 507.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 508-09.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 512-16.

the latter two, the mathematical absurdities, are morally harmless, whereas the pro-slavery view is extremely dangerous morally.¹⁷

Having said all this, it must also be recognized that though the institution of slavery be unjust, illegitimate, illogical, and immoral, nonetheless the practical problem of dismantling it is not simple. Here Condorcet may have been influenced by the attitude of his friend, Thomas Jefferson. Condorcet in his writings in the 1780s on abolition kept discussing what was happening in America, which he saw as the beginning of the slow process of eliminating slavery. There is a work of his, *De l'influence de la Révolution de l'Amérique sur l'Europe*, dedicated to the Marquis de Lafayette, and written in 1787-89, in which in the first chapter we are told that though slavery still exists in some of the United States, nonetheless all of the enlightened persons are ashamed of it and it will soon be eliminated. In the postscript to the *Reflexions*, Condorcet listed some American laws that would lead to the end of slavery and said that slavery was universally regarded as a crime in the thirteen colonies, as a splotch on the glory of liberty.¹⁸

But the problem of abolishing such an institution involving so many people and so much property needs to be considered carefully. The first step Condorcet proposed (along with many English and American abolitionists) was the legal forbidding of any further trade in slaves. Such trade should be treated as criminal, as a form of kidnapping. Such a law would have the effect also of ameliorating the situation of those in slavery, since the owners would have to treat them better since there would be no new source of supply of other slaves.¹⁹

Next Condorcet proposed that children born of slaves be freed at age thirty-five and given a stipend and a pension by their former masters. If a master does not want to commit himself to this, then the child should be freed at birth, and the mother will decide how it shall be raised. (And Condorcet, who was extremely careful in his proposals, also offered precise conditions as to how the mother would be enabled to do this.) As for children who were slaves when Condorcet's law would have gone into effect, those aged fifteen or below should be freed at age forty, and those aged over fifteen when the law goes into effect should be freed at age fifty. Condorcet also proposed conditions that should exist for the freed slaves and arrangements to

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 516; and Condorcet, "Lettre de Condorcet à un Marquis (La Fayette?)", in Cahen, "La Société des Amis des Noirs et Condorcet", pp. 498 and 502-03.

¹⁸ Condorcet, *De l'Influence de la Révolution de l'Amérique sur l'Europe*, in *Collection des Principaux Economistes*, Vol. 14, p. 548, and *Reflexions*, pp. 542-43.

¹⁹ Condorcet, *Reflexions*, pp. 542-43.

prevent people from being mistreated while they are still slaves. He also would set up a public office to defend the interest of the blacks. Further a tariff scale would be announced stating how much a slave of age X would have to pay, or have paid for him, in order to be free.²⁰

Condorcet claimed that the slow effect of his proposed legislation should allow it to operate successfully. Slavery would disappear little by little while other economic ways of running the colonial societies developed. What would these societies be like with two free peoples with customs and habits that quite different? After a few generations, Condorcet asserted, the differences would disappear, except for skin color. Condorcet, in several of his writings insisted, in addition, that the cost of a society of free blacks is not necessarily greater than that of a slave economy. He tried to show that there would be more interest on the part of the blacks in cultivating the land if they were free than under present slave conditions. As to what might happen in the whole world, Condorcet foresaw first that the decadent planter culture would be replaced by the sort of stable family society of the British colonies in North America. Second, he saw an ideal opportunity to solve some other European problems. Protestants could be encouraged to develop the colonies. And next, Jews could be told that they could practice their religion freely in the colonies. Religious quarrels could be overcome and the industry and ability of the persecuted groups could be channeled into fruitful endeavors.²¹

Having presented his arguments for abolition, and having offered his gradual plan for ending slavery without too much economic or cultural shock, Condorcet next considered possible objections to his views. One such objection is that the mistreatment of blacks is exaggerated. The slaves do not really care about the loss of liberty, and they are actually happier than the "free" peasants of Europe. Also, the slave owners have an interest in protecting them and so guard them against dangers.²²

Condorcet contended that all these points are false. The testimony of slaves who have escaped gives ample evidence that they were mistreated. Only the supporters of slavery seem to be unaware of the mistreatment. Secondly, everyone, black or white, wants to be free, and suffers when he cannot exercise his freedom. People will only choose slavery over freedom when the free state would lead quickly to their death from starvation or exposure. Next, is the Caribbean slave better off than the European peasant? Condorcet was willing to

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 521-24.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 525-32.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 532.

admit that this might be the case for the poorest peasant, but not for the rest; the slave, he maintained, was obviously worse off. Since both the slaves and the European peasants were suffering, both needed to be helped. "One injustice does not cease being unjust because it can be proven that it is not the only one taking place on the surface of the earth". Lastly, slaves are treated like animals. Both are grossly mistreated, so it is obvious that slave owners do not really take care of the slaves.²³

The next objection Condorcet considered was that he was treating some of the finest Europeans, the colonial slaveholders, as if they were criminals. Condorcet insisted that they *were* criminals, since a crime, as he said at the outset of the presentation, is always a crime. The European colonists do not see this because they are guided by a false conscience. Condorcet was struck by this point very early in his abolitionist crusade. In 1773 he had published his *Sermon sur la fausse conscience* about the slaveowner's view of himself. If he really was a good person, he would want to change his slaves into free productive and happy men. If it were brought about, everyone involved would be restored, rejuvenated, and redeemed, and slavery would be over. There is a slight Messianic flavor in Condorcet's finale, somewhat like that in his last work, *The Sketch*.²⁴

Condorcet's *Reflexions* were written in 1783. He added a postscript to the 1788 edition surveying the state of affairs regarding slavery in the newly established United States of America. Condorcet saw great hope in the constitutional possibility that the importation of slaves could be forbidden after 1808, and in the abolitionist provisions in the constitutions of the northern states. He also believed that the freedom that existed in the United States with regard to expression would soon lead to the end of slavery. In England, Condorcet believed that the anti-slavery movement was so strong that sooner or later it would prevail. In France, the abolitionist movement had just organized itself into the Société des Amis des Noirs. So far, Condorcet admitted, the Society had not accomplished much, but he hoped (in 1788!) that the then present French government, of which none other "had shown a more enlightened spirit of humanity" would do something about the problem.²⁵

An unpublished fragment of Condorcet's in the Bibliothèque de l'Institut pokes ironic fun at the *Declaration des droits de l'homme*,

²³ *Ibid.*, pp. 532-35.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 536-40. Condorcet's *Sermon sur la fausse conscience* (Yverdan, 1773), is discussed in Condorcet's note, pp. 536-37.

²⁵ Condorcet, *Reflexions*, pp. 542-43.

“tous les hommes blancs naissent libres et égaux en droits: donner une methode pour déterminer le degré de blancheur nécessaire!”

Condorcet's view thus boils down to a few points. (1) Freedom is a natural right and cannot be abrogated. (2) Enslavement is both a legal and moral crime, and remains a crime regardless of the circumstances before, during and after. (3) Slaves are usually mistreated. (4) Slave economies would probably fare better if they were turned into free ones. (5) Abolition should take place quite gradually over about forty years. (6) The resulting culture will be very much better qualitatively for both slaves and masters, blacks and whites. All will thrive and create a rich society for everyone.

Condorcet was a good friend of Thomas Jefferson, who was our ambassador in Paris in the 1780's. Jefferson had purchased two copies of Condorcet's *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des Nègres* in 1788, and apparently in early 1789 was preparing a translation of it.²⁶ And it was apparently partly through Jefferson that Condorcet got his information about American developments. Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* were first issued in France in 1784-85 (and were in fact written in 1781-82 in answer to a query by a French diplomat stationed in Philadelphia.)²⁷ Jefferson was anti-slavery most of the time, though he had a great fear of the possible effects of abolition. Like Condorcet, Jefferson felt that the rights of man are applicable to all, black or white, and that slavery is a violation of natural rights of human beings. His repeated efforts against the entrenched system were in the *realpolitik* of his time, seldom successful, but they were more so as time went on.

In his *Notes on Virginia*, Jefferson raised a problem that was usually central to the pro-slavery theories, namely the possibility that the black Africans, the brown Indians, and other people of color are naturally inferior in some important mental or spiritual sense to European whites. After considering the physical differences between blacks and whites, Jefferson discussed the evidence that the blacks were mentally inferior to the whites, concluding, “Comparing them by their faculties of memory, reason and imagination, it appears to me that in memory they are equal to the whites: in reason much inferior, as I think one could scarcely be found capable of tracing and comprehending the investigations of Euclid: and that in imagination they are dull,

²⁶ Thomas Jefferson, *The Papers of Thomas Jefferson*, Vol. 14 (Princeton, 1958), note on p. 498. Only four pages of the translation exist. They are reproduced on pp. 494-98.

²⁷ See Winthrop D. Jordan, *White over Black* (Chapel Hill, 1968), p. 432.

tasteless and anomolous".²⁸ Later, our third President 'concluded his examination by saying, "I advance it, therefore, as a suspicion only, that the blacks, whether originally a distinct race, or made distinct by time and circumstances, are inferior to the whites in the endowments both of body and mind".²⁹ Slaveholders used this view, plus a stronger one offered by the Scottish philosopher, David Hume, to justify keeping the mentally inferior blacks in bondage.³⁰ Condorcet did not use arguments about human equality (as Grégoire later did) to bolster his case. However, he apparently indicated his disapproval of Jefferson's view to the author. Therefore in 1791, Jefferson was glad to tell Condorcet the good news that he, Jefferson, had met an intelligent Negro, Benjamin Banneker, who was "a very respectable mathematician". "I have seen very elegant solutions of Geometrical problems by him. Add to this that he is a worthy and respectable member of society".³¹ His case was to come back and haunt Jefferson. Condorcet's successor as leader of the French abolitionist movement, the abbé Grégoire, wrote a work early in the nineteenth century, *La Littérature des nègres*, to refute the theory of Jefferson and Hume on Negro inferiority. Grégoire gave some case histories of intellectual Negroes, including Banneker, to show that blacks were capable of the same level of intellectual achievement as whites.³² Grégoire sent Jefferson a copy. Jefferson wrote to their mutual friend, Joel Barlow, that Grégoire's cases including Banneker's did not amount to much. "We know he had spherical trigonometry enough to make almanacs, but not without the suspicion of aid from Eliot, who was his neighbor and friend, and never missed the opportunity of puffing him. I have a long letter from Banneker, which shows him to have had a mind of very common stature indeed".³³

In the middle of 1789 it seemed that the French abolitionist movement might achieve its goals as a result of the Revolution. Condorcet,

²⁸ Thomas Jefferson, *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. H. A. Washington (Washington 1854), Vol. 8, Query 14, p. 382.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 386.

³⁰ See R. H. Popkin, "Hume's Racism", *Philosophical Forum*, Vol. 9 (nos. 2-3, 1977-78), pp. 211-26.

³¹ Jefferson's letter to Condorcet is cited in Jordan, *White over Black*, p. 452. On Aug. 30, 1791, Jefferson wrote Banneker that he was sending the latter's almanac to "Monsieur de Condozett [sic]".

³² Henri Grégoire, *De la Littérature des Nègres* (Paris 1808). Banneker is discussed on pp. 211-12.

³³ Jefferson's letter to Grégoire, Washington, February 1809, and Jefferson's letter to Joel Barlow, Monticello, October 8, 1809, in *The Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, ed. H. A. Washington, Vol. 5, pp. 429 and 475-76.

on behalf of the Société des Amis des Noirs, issued an address, which began, "We hold that all men are born free and with equal rights, regardless of their color, their nationality, or their conditions of birth. We hold that no man can give up his freedom, that no man can seize the freedom of his fellow man, and that no society can legitimate such crime".

"We hold that, regardless of contrary laws, customs, and practices, the slave is always free, since the law of nature cannot be annulled. Accordingly, the restoration of a slave's freedom is not a gift or an act of charity. It is rather a compelling duty, an act of justice, which simply affirms an existing truth".³⁴

The Society, unfortunately, was unable to generate much enthusiasm for abolition in the Revolutionary government in spite of the fact that very influential figures like Mirabeau, Lafayette, Brissot, Pétion, and Condorcet were leaders of the group. This sad result was partly due to the political ineptness of the Society's members in the government, and mostly due to genuine French lack of interest in, or antagonism, to abolition. The planters and those engaged in the slave-trade proved to have more clout than the members of the elite Société des Amis des Noirs.³⁵ Thomas Clarkson, the English abolitionist leader, described the negotiations to get a resolution voted on condemning slavery and the slave trade. Clarkson was in Paris, continually in touch with the French abolitionists, including Condorcet. Clarkson's account shows how hard it was to get the leading abolitionists together because they were each busy with some phase of the Revolution. The rush of events kept pushing the abolitionist resolution aside. The close relationship between the English abolitionist movement and the French one, which at first was a real benefit, became a detriment. Clarkson was suspected of being a spy, and his allies in Paris became suspect. There were direct threats of physical harm made against Clarkson and the members of the Society. Under all of this pressure, the Society began to disintegrate. Lafayette retired. Mirabeau died. Condorcet was engrossed in working out a new constitution. The abolitionist resolution never came to a vote, though it would seem that it was a simple consequence of the Declaration of the Rights of Man.³⁶

³⁴ Cited from Condorcet's *Adress de la Société des Amis des Noirs à l'assemblée nationale, à toutes les villes de commerce, à toutes les manufactures, aux colonies, à toutes les sociétés des amis de la constitution de 1791*, in David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975), pp. 328 and note 73.

³⁵ See Davis, *Slavery*, pp. 94 and 112; and Ruth Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire, 1789-1831, The Odyssey of an Egalitarian* (Westport, Conn., 1971), pp. 53-109.

³⁶ Thomas Clarkson, *The History of the Rise, and Accomplishment of the Abolition*

The first genuine progress in passing any measures benefiting the blacks was due to Condorcet's successor as leader of the abolitionist movement, the abbé Henri Grégoire, 1750-1831. He was a priest from a small town in Alsace. Prior to the Revolution he was slightly known for his only public achievement, his prize-winning essay in answer to the question posed by the Academy of Metz in 1787, "How to make the Jews happy and useful in France". His essay was published early in 1789. On the strength of this he became a member of the First Estate at the meetings of the Estates General. He could not stand the pomposity and vanity of his fellow Churchmen, and he led the famous walkout of the clergymen, who then joined the Third Estate, and thereby formed the critical mass for developing the Revolution. Grégoire at the start of the Revolution was pushing his two favorite plans, one to make the Jews citizens, the other to reform the Church by putting it under state control. Up to this point in his life he seems to have been oblivious to the problems of the blacks.³⁷ Through meeting Clarkson in 1791 he became aware of the horrors of slavery.³⁸ At this time a tangential problem arose. A small group of mulattoes, offspring of wealthy planters in the colonies, lived in Paris. They petitioned the National Assembly to recognize them as citizens. The abolitionists at first feared that the mulattoes would support their fathers' views on slavery. At a dinner with them, the mulattoes agreed to denounce slavery.³⁹ Grégoire, who by this time was a major figure in the Assembly, took on the cause of the mulattoes, then the cause of ending the slave trade and slavery. Next he moved on pressing for the recognition of Haiti as an independent black republic. Grégoire wrote polemics for forty years arguing for the black cause.⁴⁰ His last great one, *De la noblesse de la peau*, (1826) is a minor masterpiece.⁴¹ Almost as soon as Grégoire was converted to the black cause, he was swept into the world of the abolitionists. He was made an honorary member of the Société des Amis des Noirs. (Ruth Necheles suggests

of the African Slave-Trade by the British Parliament (Philadelphia, 1808), Vol. 2, chap. 2.

³⁷ On Grégoire's background and development, see Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire*, chaps. 1-3.

³⁸ This is described by Clarkson in *History of the Abolition of the Slave Trade*, Vol. 2, pp. 122-23.

³⁹ See Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire*, chaps. 3 and 4.

⁴⁰ All of this is dealt with in great detail in Necheles, *op.cit.*

⁴¹ It was also published in English, entitled *Essay on the Nobility of the Skin or the Prejudice of White Persons against the Colour of Africans and their Progeny, Black and of Mixed Blood* (Paris, 1826), trans. Charlotte Nooth.

'honorary' because he could not afford the dues, which were about \$100). Soon after he was president of the organization.⁴² He also took on Condorcet's role of being the chief arguer for the cause. Grégoire's argument was somewhat different than that of Condorcet, because Grégoire's case was based on his millenarian theology, rather than on naturalistic philosophy. Grégoire made the equality of men, because they are all created by the same God, the basis of his view. Then, because men are all created equal, no man can justly enslave another. Further, and what was probably most important to Grégoire, the liberation of Jews, blacks and everyone else, would have monumental millenarian significance, setting the stage for the final redemption of all mankind.

It has been said by the excellent historian of eighteenth-century American racism, Winthrop Jordan, that, "It seems certain that it was the specifically religious impulse in anti-slavery, in contrast to the natural rights philosophy, which provided the energy and vision necessary to think and act beyond the abolition of slavery, notably in the direction of "improvement by education".⁴³ This may well have been true in France as well as America. This, however, is not the time to argue such a vast claim. Grégoire did, however, manage to accomplish a lot more than Condorcet in advancing the equality and rights of the blacks. In evaluating their respective contributions, one has to take account of their contexts. Condorcet's was the strongest voice in France for the abolition of slavery before the Revolution. He wrote the basic statement of the case, providing both a natural rights justification and a practical plan. His leadership of the Société des Amis des Noirs made it the voice of the most important liberals in the country. Yet Condorcet, Clarkson, and others, could not get sufficient political support to get a bill on slavery voted on at that time.

From July 1793 until March 25, 1794, Condorcet was in hiding at Mme. Vernet's house. A fellow boarder there was the Montagnard deputy Marcoz. A former professor mathematics from Chambéry, he not only kept mum about Condorcet's presence, but also kept him informed about political events. In all probability he would have told his fellow mathematician that the Convention's president issued a decree for the French Republic on February 4, 1794, abolishing slavery in the French overseas empire. Ironically the move was inspired less by abolitionist pressure than by expediency. After the mulattoes rebelled on Saint-Domingue, Spain and England invaded the island. Its com-

⁴² Necheles, *op.cit.*, pp. 60-66 and 69 n. 23 (where the question of the dues is discussed).

⁴³ Jordan, *White over Black*, pp. 361-62.

missioners, hoping the slaves would rally to defend Saint-Domingue, emancipated them on August 23, 1793.⁴⁴

Starting from the equality of man, Grégoire went on to lead the fight against slavery. The establishment of Haiti in 1794 made the issue of black freedom central in France. Grégoire saw Haiti as the beacon light to all oppressed peoples. In terms of the actual situation, he carried on the abolitionist struggle. The developments in the Caribbean colonies and in the United States made it possible to achieve some of the goals that had been set forth by Condorcet, by the Quakers, by the American and British liberals, etc. Hence Grégoire and his allies were able to make significant strides in the early nineteenth century.

Then, to conclude, Condorcet was obviously a major figure in the abolitionist world. He was the most philosophical of the pre-Revolutionary French opponents of slavery, and published probably the best statement of their case in his *Réflexions*. He was able to learn of important American developments, and to pass on French abolitionist views to America through his friendship with Franklin, Jefferson and others. Condorcet saw immediately that the French Revolution opened the door to making all men free. It was left to his successors to abolish slavery, the transference of Condorcet's theories into practice.

In the light of the current interest in the rise and fall of slavery as a major economic, social, and political institution, Condorcet deserves much more study in terms of both what he had to say, and the effect his views had in France and elsewhere.⁴⁵

He was the only major figure of the Enlightenment to play a role in the actual movement to eliminate slavery. His brilliant mind, applied to the topic, made crystal clear what the issues were, and what some of the basic problems of resolving them in practice were to be.

⁴⁴ In 1802, Napoleon, whose wife Josephine came from a family of planters on Martinique, reinstated slavery in the French Antilles.

⁴⁵ For an earlier study, see Edward Derbyshire Seiber, *Anti-Slavery Opinion in France during the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century*, Johns Hopkins Studies in Romance Literature and Languages, extra volume 10 (Baltimore, London and Paris, 1937).

IV

HUME'S RACISM RECONSIDERED

Professors Harry M. Bracken, David Fate Norton and myself, among others, have written on, and spoken about the racist views that appear in the writings of Locke and Hume.¹ We have been challenged by defenders of these heroes of empirical thought, who say that these indications of racist attitudes are not part of the philosophies of these thinkers, but are, at worst, just accidental or incidental expressions of prejudices which they shared with many of their times. Therefore, we are told that these expressions should not be given any philosophical significance, but should be considered in context. These views do not follow from the empirical epistemologies of either Locke or Hume.²

I have carefully stated that I do not think that the racism expressed in Hume's essay, "Of National Characters", follows from his theory of knowledge.³ In fact, as one of the matters I shall argue for in this paper, Hume's racist contention was disproven in his own day by empirical evidence that he must have known about. Hume never modified or altered his contention in the many subsequent editions

¹ We presented some preliminary views at an early meeting of the American Society for 18th-Century Studies at the University of Maryland in 1971. The following year I gave my paper on "The Philosophical Basis of Eighteenth-Century Racism" at the plenary session on racism at the American Society for 18th Century Studies at UCLA. Both Bracken and I published our views, and were asked to participate in a series of essays on racism in *Philosophia*, which we did on 1978. Bracken's articles are "Essence, Accident and Race", *Hermathena* CXVI (1973), pp. 81-96, and "Philosophy and Racism", *Philosophia* VIII (1978), pp. 241-60. I have written several articles dealing with racism. The ones relevant here are "The Philosophical Basis of 18th-Century Racism", in Harold E. Pagliaro, ed. *Racism in the Eighteenth Century, Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture*, Vol. III (1973), pp. 245-62, and "The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism" and "Hume's Racism", both reprinted in R. H. Popkin, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego, 1980), pp. 79-102 and 251-266.

² Several people have raised these points to me personally. Prof. Katherine Squadrito has been writing on this, principally against Bracken's views, but also about my own. See her "Locke's View of Essence and its Relation to Racism: a Reply to Professor Bracken", *The Locke Newsletter* VI (1975), pp. 41-51.

³ Popkin, "Hume's Racism", p. 266, and "The Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism", p. 84.

of his essays that appeared in his life time, even when challenged by James Beattie, one of the critics who bothered him most.

In the essay, "Of National Characters", written in 1748, Hume was chiefly challenging Montesquieu's theory of the role of environment in causing the differences in national character. At one point in his argument he wrote the following footnote, placed in the 1753-54 edition:⁴

"I am apt to suspect that the negroes and in general all of the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites. There never was a civilized nation of any other complexion than white, nor even any individual eminent either in action or speculation. No ingenious manufactures amongst them, no arts, no sciences. On the other hand, the most rude and barbarous of the whites, such as the ancient GERMANS, the present TARTARS, have still something eminent about them, in their valour, form of government, or some other particular. Such a uniform and constant difference could not happen in so many countries and ages, if nature had not made an original distinction betwixt these breeds of men. Not to mention our colonies, there are NEGROE slaves dispersed all over EUROPE, of which none ever discovered any symptoms of ingenuity, tho' low people, without education, will start up amongst us, and distinguish themselves in every profession. In JAMAICA indeed they talk of one negroe as a man of parts and learning, but 'tis likely he is admired for very slender accomplishments like a parrot, who speaks a few words plainly".⁵

Hume was prejudiced about the Irish.⁶ So, he was also prejudiced about people of color. His alleged inductive evidence, some say, may have been the best available at the time, and it reinforced what he already believed. I have tried to show that he offered an extreme view for his time, claiming that there was an initial differentiation of people that was unchangeable, and that this explained the cultural and intellectual superiority of whites as compared to people of color. Hume's view was a non-theological form of polygenesis, making it a matter of nature rather than God, that some species of people have greater intellectual and cultural abilities than others.⁷ The previous form of

⁴ See the introduction to Vol. III of Hume's *The Philosophical Works* (London, 1882) for the history of the essays.

⁵ David Hume, "Of National Characters", in *The Philosophical Works*, ed. by T. H. Green and T. H. Grose, (London, 1882), Vol. III, p. 252.

⁶ See, for instance, his remarks in *A Treatise of Human Nature* (Oxford, 1978), Selby-Bigge edition, concerning the source of prejudice, Book I, sec. xiii, p. 146 ff. Hume used one of his anti-Irish comments as an example, and offered an explanation of how people can accept general rules that overrule their evidence. This might explain how Hume managed to ignore the counter-evidence to his own views about the inferiority of blacks.

⁷ See Popkin, "Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism", pp. 93-94, and "Hume's Racism", pp. 253-58.

the irremedial species differential theory, the pre-Adamite theory of Isaac La Peyrère, 1596-1676, proposed a separate pre-Biblical origin of most people.⁸ La Peyrère's theory, set forth to justify his vision of the fulfillment of Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism expectations, was quickly transformed by Virginia planters into a justification of their treatment of black slaves.⁹ In the second half of the 18th century, Hume's naturalistic formulation of the polygenetic theory as a way of accounting for black inferiority was taken over by many defenders of African slavery in America and Europe, which Hume must have known about if he even glanced at Beattie's answer to him.¹⁰

Since I wrote about this, I have learned, partly from the researches of Henry Louis Gates,¹¹ and partly from materials I have come across in working on various projects about 17th- and 18th-century intellectual history, that Hume's view had been empirically falsified in his own time, and that he must have known this. Hence, his advocacy of this racist view must represent something significant in his intellectual world, since he was willing to hold it in print in the face of known factual data disproving it.

In some of the literature about racism it is made to appear that only nasty fanatics set forth these views—cranks like Houston Stewart Chamberlain, Adolf Hitler, Senator Theodore Bilbo, the leaders of the Ku Klux Klan, etc. However, as study after study has shown, some of the best minds of all time have worked out justifications of antisemitism, slavery, European domination of people of African or

⁸ On La Peyrère's theory see Popkin, "Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism", pp. 91-92, and "Pre-adamism in 19th Century American Thought: Speculative Biology and Racism", *Philosophia* VIII (1978), pp. 205-39.

⁹ Morgan Godwyn, a preacher in Virginia, complained about the use of "the Pre-Adamite whimsey" by the planters to deny the humanity of the blacks. See his *The Negro's-and Indian's Advocate. Suing for their Admission into the Church: or, a persuasive to the instructing and Baptizing of the Negroes and Indians in our Plantations* (London, 1680), Preface and chap. 1.

¹⁰ Winthrop Jordan, in *White over Black: American Attitudes toward the Negro, 1550-1812*, (Chapel Hill, 1968), said that Hume went further than previous philosophers "by hitching superiority to complexion", p. 253. Some of those who used Hume's views are cited in Popkin, "Hume's Racism", p. 263. Many more appear in Gates's dissertation. James Beattie's answer to Hume appears in his *Essay on the Nature and Immutability of Truth* (Edinburgh, 1776), pp. 310 ff. The work was first published in 1770.

¹¹ Professor Gates has kindly let me read over the manuscript of his dissertation on the discussion of black literature in the 18th century. We have also had the opportunity to discuss our common interests in 18th-century racial theories.

Asiatic origins, etc.¹² The early 'anthropological' formulations of the different species of mankind reek of these kinds of prejudices against people of color.¹³ The great Christian theologians from the Church Fathers to Martin Luther offer a theological basis for antisemitism. In the 17th century, a kind of Millenarian optimism briefly bred a philo-semitic attitude and an egalitarianism about all mankind. This had followed a period of European expansion that had led to an enormous increase in contact with other cultures all over the globe. In the Renaissance participation by Africans in European affairs was not rare, nor was intellectual contact between Christians and Jews. The desire to find the original basic message of Christianity led many Europeans to examine the Judaic roots of Christianity, and to consult with the living authorities, the Jewish scholars in Italy, France, Holland, Germany, etc.¹⁴

The expansion of Europe in its contacts with Africa and America quickly led to incorporation of some Africans in European enterprises, and to some Africans seeking their fortunes in Europe. The plot of *Othello* must have made sense to an English audience, and so it did not present an outlandish possibility of a black commanding a European army, and marrying a white princess. There had been a black commander in Cortez's army in Mexico. A black led Coronado's expedition across the American southwest, and he was given the post because he had been on previous explorations in North America. African intellectuals helped European scholars like Guillaume Postel to master Near Eastern languages.¹⁵

¹² See for instance, Leon Poliakov, *The Aryan Myth. A History of Racial and Nationalist Ideas in Europe* (New York, 1974), Part II; David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution 1770-1823* (Ithaca, 1975); and Stephen Jay Gould, *The Mismeasure of Man* (New York, 1981).

¹³ See the citations from Linnaeus, Buffon and the first American edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in Popkin, "Philosophical Basis of 18th-Century Racism", and from Dr. Samuel Morton, in Popkin, "Pre-Adamism and Racism".

¹⁴ See R. H. Popkin, "Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism" in Perez Zagorin, editor, *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment* (Los Angeles, 1980), pp. 67-80; and "Millenarianism in England, Holland and America: Jewish and Christian Relations in England, Holland and Newport", in S. Hook, W. O'Neill and R. O'Toole, *Philosophy, History and Social Action, Essays in Honor of Lewis Feuer, Boston Studies in the Philosophy of Science*, Vol. 107, (Dordrecht, 1988), pp. 349-72.

¹⁵ Postel said that "our Niger" was accompanying him in the Near East. See Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel* (The Hague, 1981), p. 99. She cites H. L. Gates as suggesting that the person may have been Tasfa Seyyon, the Ethiopian who translated the Bible into Ethiopic around 1530. On blacks in various explorations in America, see Peter M. Bergmann, *The Negro in America* (New York, 1969),

A bizarre episode that has not been appreciated for what it represented in Jewish and African history in relation to European history is the career of David Reubeni, who arrived in Italy in 1530, announcing that he was the brother of a Jewish king in Africa, and that he wanted to join forces with the Pope and prepare for the Messianic Age. Reubeni claimed to be Elijah announcing the great events to come. He was taken into the Vatican as a guest. He preached there. He went to Portugal and gained a great following among the Jews who had been forcibly converted to Catholicism. The King of Portugal's secretary joined him. Finally, after several years, Reubeni was arrested by Emperor Charles V, and burned to death. The accounts of this episode up to 1700 describe Reubeni as being black, and they assume he was from Ethiopia, where it was already known that there were black Jews.¹⁶

Thus, in the 16th century, a black playing a role co-equal to a European in European culture, was a known phenomenon, and did not create amazement. Similarly, Jews play an important role in the Voyages of Exploration, and in religious studies. Some converted Jews became important professors of Hebrew and other Oriental languages.¹⁷

By the mid-17th century many Millenarians expected all of the Jews to convert to Christianity by 1656, and to be recalled to their homeland and to their place in God's affections. Some also expected, with Jesus's reign on earth, to see an egalitarian world, a communistic community of brotherly love, all over the planet. The Gospel would be preached to everyone and all of the Gentiles would join in this earthly paradise.¹⁸

pp. 2-7; and Augustus Low and Virgil A. Clift, *Encyclopedia of Black America*, (New York, 1981), p. 77.

¹⁶ See Jacques Basnage, *The History of the Jews from Christ to the Present* (London, 1708), Book VII, chap. xxvii, p. 715. He said of Reubeni, "this little Man, who was as black as an Ethiopian".

¹⁷ For example, Paulus Riccius, d. 1541, who flourished in Italy; John Immanuel Tremellius, 1510-1580, who was the Hebrew professor at Cambridge; Philippe d'Aquin, d. 1650, who was Hebrew Professor at the Collège Royale in Paris; and Judah Monis, 1683-1764, who was professor of Hebrew at Harvard.

¹⁸ See Peter Toon, *Puritans, the Millennium and the Future of Israel: Puritan Eschatology 1600 to 1660* (Cambridge and London, 1970); Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), pp. 114-15, and "Till the Conversion of the Jews", William Andrews Clark Lecture, 1981, in R. H. Popkin, editor, *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought, 1650-1800* (Leiden, 1989); and R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza and the Conversion of the Jews", *International Symposium Commemorating the 350th Anniversary of the Birth of*

What followed instead of this wonderful vision was, of course, the development of European imperialism. Justification for European domination was needed to make the rape of America and the enslavement of Africa part of progress. Secular justifications appeared, which wiped away previous acceptance of African participation in European affairs, and Jewish-Christian symbiosis. The Africans were now seen as a lesser species, incapable of participating in European culture, and Jews were now seen as permanent outsiders, who had no place in the emerging national cultures of Europe.¹⁹ Hume became a spokesman for the first view, Voltaire for the second, each of them a hero of the European Enlightenment.²⁰

The Jewish contribution to European culture was quickly forgotten and finally denied as a genuine possibility. Cotton Mather had proudly pointed out that Harvard was based on the eastern European Jewish notion of higher education,²¹ and Harvard was soon to become a center of WASPish anti-semitism.²² The great Jewish intellectuals of 18th-century Europe, such as the economist Isaac de Pinto, and the philosopher Moses Mendelssohn, were exceptions proving nothing. Hume said De Pinto was a good man, tho' a Jew. Voltaire regarded him as benighted because he claimed to be a *philosophe* and a Jew. Mendelssohn, the Jewish Socrates, was the marvel of his age,

Spinoza, Amsterdam, Nov. 1983, ed. C. de Deugd, *Spinoza's Political and Theological Thought* (Amsterdam, Oxford, 1984), pp. 171-83.

¹⁹ The abbé Grégoire, in his *Enquiry concerning the Intellectual and Moral Faculties and Literature of Negroes* (Brooklyn, 1808), p. 39, noted the economic need to justify African slavery and the rape of America as a basis for color racism.

Poliakov, in *The Aryan Myth*, Part II, and in his *History of Antisemitism*, Vol. III, *From Voltaire to Wagner* (New York, 1975), shows how developing nationalism in the 19th century quickly became anti-semitic.

²⁰ See Popkin, "Philosophical Basis of Modern Racism", pp. 93-99, and "Philosophical Basis of 18th-Century Racism", pp. 245-46 and 250.

²¹ Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi Americana: or the Ecclesiastical History of New England from its First Planting in the Year 1620 unto the Year of our Lord 1698* (London, 1702), Book IV, see 1, "The History of Harvard College". On p. 126 Mather said, "the Reader knows that in every Town among the Jews there was a School whereat Children were taught the Reading of the Law, and, if there were any Town destitute of a School, the Men of the Place did stand excommunicate, until One were erected. Besides and beyond which they had *Midrashoth* or Divinity Schools, in which they expounded the Law to their Disciples. Whether the Churches of New-England have been duely careful or no, about their other Schools, they have not been altogether careless of their *Midrashoth*, and it is well for them they have not".

²² See Lewis S. Feuer, "The Stages in the Social History of Jewish Professors in American Colleges and Universities", in *American Jewish History* LXXI (1982), pp. 432-65.

but most people could not understand why, if he was so bright, he did not become a Christian. Since he did not, wise as he was, he was naturally ineligible to be a professor in Germany, or a member of the Berlin Academy of Sciences.²³

With regard to the black scene, even before Hume's nasty racist claim, it was being argued that blacks were naturally and irremediably inferior. To test this, the Duke of Brunswick acquired an African male child, Anton Wilhem Amo, and raised him at the castle in Wolfenbüttel (where Leibniz was the librarian). He was given a European education and became a university professor at Jena and Halle, and made respectable contributions to the scholarly world in terms of publications in Latin.²⁴

Another West-African youth, Jacques-Elisa-Jean Capitein, who was taken to Holland, learned many languages and went to the University of Leiden. In 1742 he was sent as a Calvinist missionary to take charge of education in Ghana. He did a dissertation claiming that slavery was not contrary to Christianity, and this work was published in Latin and Dutch.²⁵

Hume had heard of the Negro in Jamaica who wrote poetry, and brushed him off as being amazing as a parrot who spoke a few words plainly. The person in question was Francis Williams who had been born in Jamaica around 1700. The Governor of the island, the Duke of Montague, was so struck by his talents, that he wanted to see if

²³ On De Pinto see Popkin, "Hume and Isaac de Pinto", *Texas Studies in Literature and Language* XII (1970), pp. 417-30; and "Hume and Isaac de Pinto, Five New Letters", in *Essays in Honor of Ernest C. Mossner* (Edinburgh, 1974), pp. 99-127. Hume's remark about his being alright "tho a Jew", appears in Hume's letter to Thomas Rous, 28 August 1767, printed in the latter article.

On Mendelssohn, see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn* (University, Alabama, 1973), esp. chap. 3.

²⁴ On this, see K. A. Britwum, art. "Amo, A. W"., in *Dictionary of African Biography*, Vol. I (1977), pp. 196-97. It is reported that "Amo's fame as an African scholar spread throughout academic circles in the Europe of his day". (p. 197) Britwum says, from examining Amo's Latin manuscripts that "his intellectual qualities have been exaggerated, since his Latin was not up to the high standards of his time, and is often unintelligible". Hume never saw the manuscripts, so could not have just brushed off Amo's achievements.

Henri Grégoire discussed Amo in his *De la Littérature des Nègres* (Paris, 1808), pp. 198-202. He said that Amo was versed in astronomy and spoke Latin, Greek, Hebrew, French, Dutch and German, which was more than Hume could do.

²⁵ On Capitein, see Grégoire, *De la littérature des Nègres*, pp. 223-234. Grégoire, the great opponent of slavery, said Capitein's dissertation was "riche en érudition, mais très pauvre en raisonnement", p. 234.

There is a brief article on Capitein in the *Dictionary of African Biography*, Vol. I, p. 224, by M. A. Kwamena-Poh.

Williams, properly educated, would be equal to whites with the same education. So, Williams was sent to Cambridge University, and made great progress in mathematics. He became the first black college graduate in the Western hemisphere. While in England, he published a ballad which became extremely popular that began, "Welcome, welcome brother debtor". When he returned to Jamaica he opened a school where he taught Latin and mathematics, and published some Latin poetry.²⁶ Williams was quite offended by Hume's characterization of him. He made a public outcry, which Hume apparently ignored, since *Williams's case clearly disproved Hume's generalization*. Williams's answer to Hume, and his living refutation of his racism was widely known in English intellectual circles in Hume's day.²⁷

Henry Louis Gates has shown that the Boston poetess, Phyllis Wheatley, was taken as *the* empirical disproof of Hume's claim. Her verses were published in America and England in 1772. She was hailed and adulated by the abolitionists, while the Humeans (that is those who accepted Hume's racial theory) looked for way of explaining her case away. She was sent to England in 1773 and many important people came to meet her, and to find out if she could really write poetry. Maybe she was a fraud, and somebody else wrote her poetry. So she had to give public demonstrations of her ability to do creative writing.²⁸ Maybe she was not really black. Thomas Jefferson brushed aside her case saying (a) she was a mulatto, and (b) her poetry was mediocre.²⁹ As Gates has shown, the importance of her just being a black who wrote literature far overshadowed the evaluation of her as a creative artist. If her case were not a fluke, a freak, or a fraud, then Hume and all of his racist followers had been disproven. The abbé Henri Grégoire, the great egalitarian of the French Revolution, included her in his study of fifteen black writers and intellectuals that he put forth in his *Littérature des nègres* as an answer to Hume and Jefferson, and reprinted several of her poems.³⁰

²⁶ On Williams career, see Grégoire, *Littérature des Nègres*, pp. 236-245. One of Williams' Latin odes with French translation appears on pp. 241-245.

²⁷ Williams and his reaction to Hume's remark, are discussed at length in Henry Louis Gates' dissertation.

²⁸ On this, see Grégoire, *Littérature des Nègres*, pp. 260-272, and Gates' dissertation.

²⁹ Jefferson raised these points in his *Notes on Virginia*.

³⁰ Grégoire, *Littérature des Nègres*, pp. 35-36, made Hume and Jefferson the leading spokesmen for the view that Negroes are intellectually and culturally inferior. He referred to Hume's footnote from the essay, "Of National Characters" and to Jefferson's *Notes on Virginia* of 1787.

In view of what we now know about how intense the discussion was in Hume's lifetime about his claim of the intellectual and cultural inferiority of people of color, what can we say about his sticking by his assertion? He put it forth as an empirical induction based on information about all ages and places. Hume showed no concern to look into the factual data about states of affairs in Africa and Asia (though he was under-secretary of state for colonial affairs and was friendly with leaders of the East India Company.) He had heard something about Francis Williams, since he sneeringly referred to his case. He did not change his reference when Williams's accomplishments were broadcast to the learned world, and when Williams specifically tried to get Hume to notice him and what he did for a living. Professors Amo and Capitein were well known throughout Europe. And Hume was alive and still writing when Phyllis Wheatley became a stellar phenomenon of the age (and was brought to England to disprove publicly Hume's thesis).

If Hume genuinely expressed himself on the difference between the races on the basis of empirical investigation and induction, then he was a lousy empirical scientist since he overlooked the well-known critical data that disproved him. But his reference to the man in Jamaica who wrote poetry shows he knew something about Francis Williams. Instead of guessing about his accomplishments, he could have inquired, and discovered that Williams's career disproved his claim. In case he was unaware of the findings being presented all around him, and in case he did not read the current "scientific" literature, he would have noted some of it in Beattie's answer to him, which he was aware of, or in Edward Long's *History of Jamaica* of 1774, where Williams's case was discussed at length. Long had cited Hume as holding "from his observations on the native Africans, to conclude that these are inferior to rest of the species, and utterly incapable of the higher attainments of the human mind".³¹ He then mentioned Beattie's disagreement and said that Beattie produced no worthwhile evidence.³² Long supported Hume's view with a vengeance, with his own survey of the data. Being more empirical than Hume, Long realized that he had to deal with "a personage, who made a conspicuous figure in this island, and even attracted the notice of many in England"—Francis Williams. Book III, chap iv is devoted to him. It gives his biography, a nasty picture of his character, the Latin text of a poem of his with full English translation, and then an evaluation contending that it is a bad poem. On the basis of his literary criticism, Long argued

³¹ Edward Long, *The History of Jamaica*, 3 vols. (London, 1774), Vol. II, p. 376.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 475.

that Williams's case did not prove a black could be intellectually or culturally equal to a white.³³ Long, at least, tried to defend his view in terms of the known data. Hume apparently made no effort to find out what the data was.

Hume's reaction to Beattie's work, whose last part is entirely devoted to showing the pernicious effects of Hume's racism on the defenders of slavery in the Western Hemisphere, and to showing how wrong Hume was on the matter, and to offering a counter-theory, that intelligence and cultural achievements are the products of environmental conditions, indicates his 'scientific' concern for truth. Beattie's work is entitled *An Essay on the Immutability of Truth*.³⁴ Hume dismissed the whole work, from the beginning to end, as the work of "that bigotted silly Fellow", Beattie.³⁵

Hume did not look into the facts in the case. He managed to avoid taking cognizance of the facts that disproved his claim, even though he knew of at least some of them. He just insulted an opponent as a bigot who tried to point out that Hume was one, and a dangerous one, since he was being used as the theoretician of the defenders of slavery.³⁶

I think we can conclude (a) that Hume was a poor empirical researcher, and (b) that he was a dishonest researcher, who knowingly

³³ Long quoted (p.477) a Mr. Estwick as holding, "Although a Negro is found in Jamaica or elsewhere, ever so sensible and acute; yet, if he is incapable of moral sensations, or perceives them only as beasts do simple ideas, without the power of combination, in order to use; it is a mark that distinguishes him from the man who feels, and is capable of these moral sensations, who knows their application, and the purposes of them, as sufficiently, as he himself is distinguished from the highest species of brutes".

Long and Estwick engaged in what the late Imre Lakatos called "concept-stretching" to avoid having to take Williams's case seriously. Hume engaged in "monster-barring", just refusing to admit the case. See Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations*, ed. by John Worrall and Elie Zahar (Cambridge, New York, 1976).

³⁴ James Beattie, *Essay on the Immutability of Truth*. The last section of Beattie's long work attacking Hume is devoted to challenging Hume's claim of "the superiority of white men over black".

³⁵ See Hume's letter to William Strahan, 26 October 1775, in *The Letters of David Hume*, ed by J. Y. T. Grieg, 2 vols. (Oxford, 1932), Vol. II, p. 301.

³⁶ Beattie cited some of the use being made of Hume's view. In my "Hume's Racism", I cited several more cases of works published while Hume was alive. See p. 263. Winthrop Jordan, in his excellent study, *White over Black*, pp. 305-07, discusses Hume's baleful influence on the debates about Negro equality and slavery in America.

Gates has found that Hume's influence was far more pernicious than I had suspected, and that Hume's view had become the official basis of pro-slavery arguments in America.

allowed his findings to be used for inhumane purposes. This may not follow from his theory of knowledge or his scepticism, but it did follow from the way he applied his philosophical outlook.

The contemporary American philosopher, John Searle, has said that "neither the great rationalists—Descartes, Leibniz and Spinoza, nor the great empiricists, Locke, Berkeley and Hume and their modern followers such as Peirce, Carnap and Quine—were engaged in facilitating a racist ideology".³⁷ This may be the case in terms of their efforts as epistemologists and metaphysicians. But can we now not say that Hume, as an alleged leading empirical social scientist of the Enlightenment, was "facilitating a racist ideology" in putting forth his false generalization, and accepting the way it was used by the racists of his day?

Hume on the color question and Voltaire on the Jewish question provided the basis for secular racism. The use of their remarks for this purpose occurred while they were alive, and they did nothing to disown their racist followers. Hume had ample evidence to lead him to change his views (as did Voltaire), but he chose not to. His views and Voltaire's have to be classified as dishonest in terms of what each knew that disproved their assertions. They both spoke out as major social scientists and social philosophers, not as casual country-club anti-semites and color racists. They included their racist views in their Enlightenment programmes, and they certainly influenced the way the secular nationalist world that emerged in the 19th century adopted European centered racism as a fundamental view. Hume may not have developed his racist views because he was an empiricist, but he did use the trappings of his empirical scientific method to cloak them with authority. This authority was sufficient to provide a formulation for a naturalistic polygenetic racism until a more 'scientific' basis could be developed (as it was by Dr. Samuel Morton and Prof. Louis Agassiz in the mid-19th century). Hume's inability to take cognizance of the empirical data that disproved his views tells us something about Hume, the thinker. The fact that his 20th-century empirical followers have been able to read his writings without noticing what he said about racism tells us something about them. (Kant, early in his career, commented on the racist passage in Hume, and used it as the basis of his own racist observations.)³⁸

³⁷ John Searle, "The Rules of the Language Game", *Times Literary Supplement*, Sept. 10, 1976, pp. 1118 and 1120 (in a review of Noam Chomsky's *Reflections on Language*.)

³⁸ For Kant's use of Hume's racist view, see his *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and the Sublime*, translated by John T. Goldthwait, (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1960), pp. 110-11.

To classify Hume as a racist, it is not necessary to show that racist views follow from his empirical premises. The fact that he evaded his own empirical criteria in asserting his racism, and the fact that he knew his views were being taken as authoritative by the color racists and the defenders of slavery shows he was no innocent, just dropping a casual prejudiced remark amongst the gentlemen after dinner. Now, thanks to the work of Henry Louis Gates, that we know much more about the context in which Hume's remarks appeared, I think we can no longer offer benign excuses for "le bon David" or for his friend, Voltaire.

What may be more interesting to investigate are two matters: (1) are Hume, Voltaire and Kant typical Enlightenment thinkers in turning their racial prejudices into general claims about the nature of man, and (2) are the anti-racist thinkers, such as the abbé Grégoire and the Von Humboldt brothers, rare birds? If the answer to both is yes, then philosophers should seriously consider how their discipline can actually be used to help rather than hinder human happiness, and help rather than hinder removing some of the more destructive features of the ideologies we live by.

CONDORCET AND HUME AND TURGOT

Keith Baker in his very important study of Condorcet advanced a somewhat surprising thesis, that Condorcet was significantly influenced by the views of David Hume, principally ones that only appear in a work of Hume's that was not translated into French in the eighteenth century.¹ Hume has usually been seen as much too sceptical to have had much in common with the optimistic *philosophes*. Hume was personally very friendly with such figures as D'Alembert, Diderot, D'Holbach, Voltaire and Turgot. They admired his essays on social and political and literary topics; they admired his wit, and his style. But, as became evident, they did not share his extreme doubts about the possibility of human beings attaining genuine knowledge, or his cynicism about improving the human scene. Hence, it seems *prima facie* questionable that Hume could have seriously influenced the last of the *philosophes*, Condorcet. Baker argues that Condorcet's mathematization of the probabilities of human beliefs was most likely influenced by the strange chapter in Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Book I, Part III, sec. 11, on the probability of chances, a chapter that has usually been passed over by Hume's many, many commentators, or excused as just Hume's confusing mathematics with psychology.²

When I was first asked to write an article for *Condorcet Studies II*, I had thought of doing some historical detective work on how and when Condorcet could have come across Hume's *Treatise*. The work was published in 1739-1740 and, as Hume said, it fell still-born from the presses.³ It was hardly mentioned among philosophers in Great Britain, and it only became important when it was attacked by Thomas Reid in his *Inquiry into the Human Mind on the Principles of Common Sense* in 1764. The book was never re-issued after the

¹ Keith M. Baker, *Condorcet, From Natural Philosophy to Social Mathematics* (Chicago, 1975), chap. 3, pp. 181ff.

² *Ibid*, pp. 139-155. On p. 155 Baker says: "Hume, in effect, brought together the probability of the philosophers and the probability of the mathematicians. It is to this latter that we must now turn if we are to appreciate the importance of Hume's analysis to a mathematician such as Condorcet."

³ David Hume, *Autobiography*, in Ernest C. Mossner, *The Life of David Hume*, 2nd ed. (Oxford, 1980), p. 612: "Never literary Attempt was more unfortunate than my *Treatise of human Nature*. It fell *dead-born from the Press*; without reaching such distinction as even to excite a Murmur among the Zealots."

first printing. So, where could Condorcet have seen it? Baker tells us that Condorcet's disciple, Silvestre François Lacroix,⁴ who published a treatise on the calculus of probabilities, left notes on Hume's *Treatise*, so the work was known in Condorcet's circle. Hume was trying to sell off the unsold copies of the *Treatise* during the 1760s, so that he could put out a new edition. His arrangements with the original publisher specified that before a new edition could appear, the original edition had to be sold out, or the remaining copies bought back by the author. Advertisements in English periodicals in the 1760s indicate efforts were being made to sell off the rest of the first edition. I had hoped to trace Condorcet's knowledge of the text to this remainder sale, but have had no success.⁵

I have also not been able to find any evidence that Hume and Condorcet ever met. They could have met in the salon of Mlle. de Lespinasse when Hume was a British diplomat in Paris.⁶ Condorcet was the protégé of some of Hume's best friends. But nothing in the correspondence or the writings of either philosopher indicates that they knew each other. Of course, Hume was much older, in his fifties, and was at the height of his fame during those years in Paris. Condorcet was just a beginner, aged twenty in 1763. So, though they may have met, it made no significant impression on either of them. If they met, it was probably through the offices of Turgot, who was so active in Hume's affairs, and who was preparing the mathematical prodigy, Condorcet, to help him in his researches into economics in order to improve the human situation in France. Whether Condorcet read Hume, or made a sensible mathematics of the probabilities of belief out of Hume's muddled discussion, I do not know. Baker's case seems plausible and attractive. But if this did occur, it happened as Hume and Turgot parted company ideologically. Condorcet, as Turgot's prime disciple, moved further and further from Hume's social and political position. Baker mentions that Condorcet in an unpublished note cites Locke, Berkeley and Hume as the three who had presented the "little exact metaphysics" that was yet known.⁷ In his published picture of the sweeping development of ideas in the Enlightenment, Condorcet omitted Hume entirely from his pantheon of heroes and enlighteners. Since I do not know when and if Condorcet

⁴ Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 140.

⁵ Cf. Mossner, *op. cit.*, p. 328. David Fate Norton told me of the ads in the 1760s to sell the remaining copies of the *Treatise*.

⁶ Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 138. Baker cites a manuscript source, *Bibliothèque de l'Institut de France*, Ms. 865, f. 241.

and Hume came together, I shall instead deal with how they drifted farther and farther apart. This movement away from each other can be seen in Hume's break with Turgot, and in Condorcet's basic work, the *Vie de M. Turgot*, published several years after Hume's death.

In 1763 Turgot and Hume became good friends and admirers of each other's personality and achievements.⁸ This close friendship continued up to the famous or infamous quarrel between Hume and Rousseau. Hume seemed extremely worried that Rousseau, through his literary style, would convince Hume's Parisian friends that Hume rather than Rousseau was at fault. So Hume sent accounts of what had transpired to D'Alembert and Turgot among others. He told Turgot that Rousseau "is absolutely lunatic", and he, Hume, planned to publish an account of the affair before Rousseau could.⁹ Hume was a little taken aback when Turgot counselled caution, and worse, suggested that Rousseau had some good qualities and ideas. Turgot discussed the case with D'Holbach, la Comtesse de Boufflers and Adam Smith, as well as with D'Alembert. He sent Hume the joint opinion that he would hurt himself by publishing on the matter.¹⁰ Instead, Turgot said, "Vous trouverez votre récompense en vous-même, et l'estime et l'amitié de tous les honnêtes gens vous dédommageront de l'ingratitude d'un méchant ou d'un fou."¹¹ Four days later Turgot was trying to give excuses for Rousseau's bizarre behavior and to show that a benign account could be given of the situation.¹²

Since "next to D'Alembert [Hume's] closest friendship seems to have been with the honest and thoughtful statesman, Turgot,"¹³ Hume was beginning to feel a strain in their relations. A few months later, on March 25, 1767, Turgot wrote Hume that from the letters D'Alembert had sent him at Limoges, Hume had come to the view that Turgot was a 'zealous friend' of Rousseau.¹⁴ Turgot insisted on his very real attachment for Hume, based on his personal knowledge of him, and said that he had only run into Rousseau once twelve years ago for half an hour at D'Holbach's. Then Turgot said he really only knew

⁸ Mossner, *op. cit.*, pp. 423 and 480.

⁹ David Hume, *Letters of David Hume*, J. Y. T. Grieg (Oxford, 1932), Vol. II, p. 138.

¹⁰ John Hill Burton, *Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume* (Edinburgh & London, 1849), letter of Turgot to Hume, Paris, 23 July 1766, pp. 131-135.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 136.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 136-137, 27 July 1766.

¹³ John Hill Burton, *Life and Correspondence of David Hume* (Edinburgh, 1846), Vol. II, p. 219.

¹⁴ Burton, *Letters of Eminent Persons addressed to David Hume*, p. 150.

Rousseau as an author, and admired his works greatly. He liked Rousseau's eloquence, beauty of language and his attempt to bring about equality, justice and happiness among men. Turgot went on to explain what a great work *Émile* was.¹⁵ In this letter the grounds for the basic disagreement between Hume and Turgot began to appear, namely their opposite views about whether the human world could be improved. Turgot was praising Rousseau for views Turgot shared. He said, "*Émile* me paraît partout respirer la morale la plus pure qu'on ait encore donnée en leçons, quoiqu'on puisse, selon moi, aller encore plus loin; mais je me garderai bien de vous dire sur cela mes idées, car vous me jugerez peut-être encore plus fou que Rousseau."¹⁶

Hume delayed answering this letter and some subsequent ones until he was ready to bring out their fundamental disagreement more sharply. In a letter of June 1768 from London, he told his friend Turgot: "I know you are one of those who entertain the agreeable and laudable, if not too sanguine, hope that human society is capable of perpetual Progress towards Perfection, that the Encrease of knowledge will still prove favourable to good Government, and that since the Discovery of Printing we need no longer Dread the usual returns of Barbarism and Ignorance. Pray, do not the late Events in this Country appear a little contrary to your System? [i.e. the system which Turgot had discoursed about to the Sorbonne]. Here is a People thrown into Disorders (not dangerous ones, I hope) merely from the Abuse of Liberty, chiefly the Liberty of the Press; without any Grievance, I do not only say, real, but even imaginary; and without any of them being able to tell one Circumstance of Government which they wish to have corrected: They roar Liberty, tho' they have apparently more Liberty than any People in the World: a great deal more than they deserve; and perhaps more than any men ought to have."¹⁷ Hume, in a rage about Wilkes and his followers, went on: "This same Perfection of our Government, carryed to an Extreme, has a bad Influence on our Ministers. A Minister here can amass no Fortune, being checked in every Abuse, he can very little give Employments to his own Friends, Favorites and Flatterers [as Hume was finding out personally], but must bestow all Offices on those who by their Votes and Credit may support Government, and he can revenge himself on none of his Enemies because every one is so entrenched in Laws and Privileges, as to be able to set all the World at Defi-

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 152.

¹⁷ Hume, *Letters*, Vol. II, p. 180, letter # 417.

ance.”¹⁸ Hume went on to deplore what was happening in England in the birthpangs of its turn towards democratic government. He suggested Turgot might take his complaints as trifles, and say “they proceed from the still imperfect State of our knowledge . . . but will Men ever reach a more perfect State” while the rich are greedy, and the poor too occupied in drudgery? He ended his sad statement saying: “You see, I give you freely my Views of things, in which I wish earnestly to be refuted: The contrary Opinion is much more consolatory, and an Incitement to every Virtue and laudable Pursuit.”¹⁹

Hume had let his spleen bring forth an attack on the progress theory so dear to Turgot, based on the demagogic developments in England around Hume’s enemy, Wilkes, and based also on what Hume saw happening to himself and others in the factional political battles of the time. Since he asked his friend, Turgot, to refute him, Turgot tried briefly to do so in a letter dated July 3, 1768. Turgot dismissed “les petits désordres qui se passent sous vos yeux” and insisted on dealing with the big picture of what was to come. He conceded that a good government among men was not going to happen without crises and disorders. And the government of Great Britain was bound to have its troubles. “Votre gouvernement est bien loin d’être éclairé. Il n’y a maintenant aucun bien dans l’univers dont on ne puisse dire la même chose, et votre gouvernement n’est pas le plus facile de tous à corriger à beaucoup près.”²⁰ But, “Faudrait-il accuser la lumière et la liberté, qui nous feront passer par ces désordres pour amener un état plus heureux? Non, sans doute. Elles feront du mal en passant; à la bonne heure; mais en feront-elles plus que la tyrannie et la superstition qui voudraient les étouffer, et qui s’y efforcent vainement par les voies qui, quand les choses sont à un certain point, sont ou totalement inutiles ou atroces, et souvent l’un et l’autre? Vous ne le pensez, sans doute, pas plus que moi.” People are occupied trying to meet their needs, and “les grands” are occupied with their pleasures, and have not the time to become learned, and liberate themselves from their prejudices, “mais l’effet du progrès des connoissances est de faire qu’on n’ait pas besoin d’être savant pour avoir du bon sens, et de rendre populaires les vérités qui exigent aujourd’hui du travail pour s’en convaincre”. Having stated his faith in the perfectibility of man and the inevitability of progress, Turgot ended prophetically: “Adieu, monsieur—car le tems presse.”²¹

¹⁸ *loc.cit.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

²⁰ Burton, *Letters of Eminent Persons*, p. 163.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

This seems to be the end of their correspondence, though Turgot apparently kept up with Hume's historical writings as they appeared. The last exchange shows Hume as petty, frivolous and cynical about the possible progress of humanity. The difficulties caused by John Wilkes, the schemes and plots of the British politicians, were taken as proof that mankind was not improvable. For Turgot these items were trivial accidents on the grand road to human perfectibility, which would happen because of all of the progress in the sciences and letters.

Turgot's disciple, Condorcet, came on the scene at about this point. Turgot appointed three young mathematicians, including Condorcet, to help him solve the social and financial problems of France. Condorcet may have, as Baker claims, gotten his view that mathematics could be applied to human problems from Hume, and may have broadened Hume's slight use of arithmetic in calculating the probabilities of beliefs into a social calculus.²² But he was also dedicated to the progress and perfectibility theory of his patron, and, of course, became its most fervent advocate even in the face of the great evidence against it in the Reign of Terror. Condorcet's brief mentions of Hume in published writings deal with Hume's historical views. Condorcet was one of the leading advocates of the anti-Humean *History of England* of Catherine Macauley, which gave a Whig picture of the progressive development of better government and society in England in modern times.²³ Condorcet also used Hume as a source for an item in the *Lettre d'un théologien*.²⁴ Neither Condorcet nor Turgot discussed Hume's philosophy in print. Turgot's writings on the subjects where Hume's views would be relevant, like his article for the *Encyclopédie* on "Existence" were apparently written before he knew of Hume's views. He discussed Berkeley and Locke at length, but not Hume.

Condorcet presented the most extended statement of Turgot's views in his *Vie de Turgot* of 1784. An examination of this work shows that Condorcet's Turgot had a full system for establishing the perfectibility of human beings, and for bringing about indefinite progress in the solution of human problems. Turgot as a theorist, and as a great human being, has no relation to David Hume. Condorcet said

²² Baker contends that Condorcet used many of Hume's ideas in his famous reception speech at the *Académie française*, Baker, *op.cit.*, pp. 180-85. Some of these ideas also appear in Locke, Condillac, and Turgot, among others.

²³ Cf. Laurence L. Bongie, *David Hume, Prophet of the Counter-Revolution* (Oxford, 1965), p. 85.

²⁴ Condorcet letter to Turgot, October or November 1774, in Charles Henry, *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et de Turgot, 1770-1779* (Paris, l.s.), p. 205.

he constructed his picture of Turgot's system, and his world, from conversations with Turgot and from Turgot's few writings. Condorcet's own system, especially as stated in the *Esquisse*, is pretty much the same as Turgot's, and also has no relation to Hume, or to his ideas. Hume is mentioned in neither work. He does appear to have remained a figure in Turgot's life in the 1770s. Some books were sent to Turgot via Hume in 1770.²⁵ In December 1773 Turgot wrote Condorcet about Hume and Fontenelle, and said of them: "je sais qu'il y a des hommes très peu sensibles et qui sont en même temps honnêtes, tels que Hume, Fontenelle, etc."²⁶ This may be the conclusion Turgot drew from their differences of 1768. He added, as an example of a trait Condorcet stressed, that Turgot "tolérait aisément, dans ses amis, des opinions contraires aux siennes, pourvu qu'il les eussent de bonne foi,"²⁷ that all those insensitive people like Hume and Fontenelle "ont pour base de leur honnêteté la justice, et même un certain degré de bonté."²⁸ Condorcet made much of Turgot's tolerance of opponents and of the permanent commitment of friendship he made. We are told that he kept all of his old friends, and that to be a friend of Turgot made one worthy of public consideration.²⁹ Hume, who had been one of Turgot's close friends in 1763-66, was however dropped out of his life, in spite of Turgot's excuse for him in his letter to Condorcet of 1773.

Condorcet's *Vie de Turgot* was both a biography and a statement of the position Turgot had fought for, and to which Condorcet was devoting the rest of his entire life. In selecting material from his personal knowledge of Turgot's relations with the world, Condorcet consciously or unconsciously obliterated Hume, even as an opponent. Other foreigners such as Benjamin Franklin, Adam Smith and Richard Price are discussed. The first two were close friends of Hume, the latter a strong opponent. Condorcet showed that from the beginning of his public career until the end, Turgot propounded the theory of the unlimited perfectibility of man. We are told that at his second oration at the Sorbonne, "il prouve que leurs progrès, aux-quels on ne peut assigner aucun terme, sont une suite de la perfectibilité de l'esprit humain, perfectibilité qu'il croyait indéfinie. Cette opinion, qu'il n'a

²⁵ Turgot, *Oeuvres de Turgot*, notes de Dupont de Nemours (Paris, 1844), letter to Joseph Tucker, Paris, 12 Sept. 1770, Vol. II, pp. 801-802.

²⁶ Henry, *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et Turgot*, p. 165.

²⁷ Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*, in *Oeuvres de Condorcet*, publiées par A. Condorcet O'Connor et M. F. Arago (Paris, 1847), Vol. V, p. 165.

²⁸ Henry, *op.cit.*, p. 144.

²⁹ *loc.cit.*

jamais abandonnée depuis a été un des principaux principes de sa philosophie."³⁰

In presenting Turgot's theory of knowledge as it appears in the *Encyclopédie* article "Existence", Condorcet tells us that "Cette théorie, si neuve, qu'à peine fut-elle entendue de quelques philosophes . . . C'était un grand pas dans la connaissance la plus intime de l'esprit humain, et presque le seul qu'ait fait depuis Locke."³¹ We are further told that by this theory, Turgot "rectifait et perfectionnait encore les recherches de Locke et des disciples",³² who are not named. Turgot himself wrote two letters to an *abbé* around the same time about Berkeley's views, and in an outline of a *discours* on universal history, showing the progress of the human mind, he listed Locke, Berkeley and Condillac as "enfants de Descartes". Thus neither Turgot nor Condorcet saw Hume as having a place in the development of this new theory of knowledge, though, as Baker says, there is a manuscript note of Condorcet's listing Locke, Berkeley and Hume as innovators.

In the *Vie de Turgot*, Condorcet was giving his own version of the sources and merits of Turgot's (and Condorcet's) ideas. In presenting this, I say, he seems to have consciously or unconsciously chosen to omit Hume from any place of relevance. Nothing is mentioned about Hume's relations with Turgot in 1763-66, or about Hume's quarrel with Rousseau and Turgot's role in trying to quiet Hume down. When, in the last quarter of the *Vie de Turgot*, Condorcet came to present his construction of Turgot's philosophical system, there are many places where one would expect a mention of Hume, as when he described Turgot's empiricism, and his insistence that one had to believe in the uniformity of nature, while realizing this is not certain. "Aucune relation nécessaire ne lie pour nous le passé à l'avenir."³³ Hume had become notorious for this view, and was often attacked about it in the early criticisms of his scepticism.³⁴ Later we are told that Turgot "tolérait également et le pyrrhonisme et la croyance la plus ferme des opinions opposées aux siennes, sans même que cette opposition altérât en rien, ni son estime pour les talents, ni sa confiance pour les vertus de ceux qui les avaient embrassés".³⁵ Hume would seem to be a perfect case in point, the leading sceptic

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 21.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

³⁴ Cf. R. H. Popkin, "Joseph Priestley's Criticism of David Hume's Philosophy", *Journal of the History of Philosophy* XV (1977), pp. 437-447.

³⁵ Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*, pp. 177-178.

of the age, who was Turgot's close friend. But, no example is given of either a Pyrrhonist or a dogmatist who fitted the description.

Most of Condorcet's presentation of Turgot's philosophy was devoted to developing the basis for the progress theory, and for advocating social reform of the basis of it. After offering Turgot's version of the argument from design, Condorcet dealt with his account of evil. Evils can be limited, and "La perfectibilité dont sont douées quelques espèces, et en particulier l'espèce humaine, est à ces maux un remède lent, mais infaillible."³⁶ All obstacles to the "progrès des lumières"³⁷ are evils. Therefore, Turgot and Condorcet (but not Hume) advocated complete freedom of the press, so that people could exercise their natural rights, and overcome evils. And contrary to Hume's pessimism and cynicism, Condorcet asked, "Mais est-il possible que jamais les hommes se conforment, en général, à des vues dictées par la saine raison?" [Hume had said: "An established government has an infinite advantage by that very circumstance, of its being established, the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason."]³⁸ Non-seulement M. Turgot l'espérait, mais il regardait une perfectibilité indéfinie comme une des qualités distinctives de l'espèce humaine. Les effets de cette perfectibilité toujours croissante lui paraissaient infaillibles." And on the next page, "Cette perfectibilité lui paraissait appartenir et au genre humain en général, et à chaque individu en particulier."³⁹

To Hume no real progress was being made. He seemed to share the view of the "philosophical" historians, Bayle and Gibbon, that history is nothing but the lies, miseries, follies and catastrophes of the human race. But for Turgot and Condorcet every useful truth will be known and generally adopted one day by everyone: "Ce progrès croissant toujours de siècle en siècle, n'a point de terme, ou n'en a qu'un absolument inassignable dans l'état actuel de nos lumières." This would lead some day to world peace, and peace among men. Vice would disappear, and people would listen to reason which would tell them the way to "le bonheur de l'humanité".⁴⁰ Condorcet wound up this discussion with a peroration: "Gardons-nous de désespérer du sort de l'espèce humaine: osons envisager dans l'immensité des siècles qui nous suivront, un bonheur et des lumières dont nous ne pouvons

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 171.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 207.

³⁸ David Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", Essay XVI in *Philosophical Works*, ed. T. H. Green and T. H. Grose (London, 1882), Vol. III, p. 480.

³⁹ Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*, p. 221.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

même nous former qu'une idée vague et indéterminée. Comptons sur cette perfectibilité dont la nature nous a doués . . ."⁴¹

Hume did not live long enough to read Condorcet's version of Turgot's progress theory, but he had apparently heard enough to warn people against it. His own experience in England as its democracy was evolving made him see all the faults and none of the virtues. He was much too affected by Wilkes and his followers.⁴² His own fate as a political figure was ruined by the rising democratic criteria for office-holding. When he came to write his essay *The Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth*, he seemed to be wary of the bad effects political reformers could have, especially those who based their case on philosophical theory. He placed a note at the beginning of the essay saying: "Of all of mankind, there are none so pernicious as political projectors, if they have any power, nor so ridiculous, if they want it [could the first apply to Turgot, and the second to the rest of the *philosophes*?] on the other hand a wise politician is the most beneficial character in nature, if accompanied with authority, and the most innocent, and not altogether useless, even if deprived of it."⁴³ Maybe this is an alternative interpretation of Turgot's and Hume's roles as politicians. In the text, in the opening paragraph, Hume had counselled that to tamper in the affairs of men, "or try experiments merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be the part of a wise magistrate, who will bear reverence to what carries the marks of age."⁴⁴

Hume, as a social scientist had undermined justifications for the *ancien régime*, but had offered studies of human nature to show that people and institutions functioned by all sorts of non-rational principles. Only minor adjustments in the ways of man seemed possible, and even these, as English history, and especially the history of the Puritan Revolution showed, were fraught with danger. The damage men could do to other men was immense, the good very slight. There was no natural tendency towards human improvement. People in

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 244.

⁴² On how strongly Hume felt about Wilkes and his followers, see James Boswell, "An Account of my last interview with David Hume, Esq., 7 July 1776," in David Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, ed. Norman Kemp Smith (London, 1947), p. 77.

⁴³ Hume, "Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth", p. 480 n. 1. This note was apparently removed in the editions appearing after 1768, and was first printed in the 1752 edition. We do not know if the removal in 1768 had anything to do with Hume's failing relations with Turgot.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 480.

societies were lucky if they were not being tyrannized or living in anarchy. They should accept what was least harmful, rather than risk novelty and possible danger.

Hume died in 1776, and only saw hope in the American experience, where European institutions did not weigh down the possibilities of human development, and where wise men like his friend, Benjamin Franklin, were taken seriously. Turgot, according to Condorcet, was a bit worried that the officers of the American revolutionary army would try to establish an hereditary and military aristocracy.⁴⁵ Turgot did not live to see the development of the United States Constitution. Condorcet did, and he saw the role that social science could play in finding the best way to govern and the best way to resolve social problems.

Baker's picture, and Condorcet's text, make clear that he combined a use of the mathematics of probabilities and a theory about the perfectability of human nature to develop his many reform projects. The first he may have gotten from Hume, but the second came from Turgot and D'Alembert. If one compares Condorcet's careful analysis of how to end slavery in the New World without creating mayhem, with Hume's off-the-cuff espousal of the natural inferiority of negroes, one can see the huge gulf separating the two. For Condorcet, slavery was unjust and evil, a denial of human rights. Therefore the "enlightened" social scientist had to consider how to eliminate this institution in the actual context in which it was functioning. Condorcet's detailed elaborate plan,⁴⁶ covering forty years of freeing the slaves, contrasts sharply with Hume's blithe footnote in his essay *Of National Characters*, offering a brief inductive survey of the types of mankind, concluding that negroes have been, are, and will be naturally inferior to whites in intellectual affairs. Evidence to the contrary, like the case of Francis Williams in Jamaica (a Cambridge University graduate who wrote Latin poetry and ran a school) is dismissed as irrelevant and trivial. Hume suggested Williams was probably like a parrot who spoke a few words plainly.⁴⁷

The gulf became greater as Condorcet began to have influence on events through groups like the *Académie française* and the *Société des Amis des Noirs* before the Revolution and through the various com-

⁴⁵ Condorcet, *Vie de Turgot*, p. 210.

⁴⁶ Condorcet, *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres* (Neufchâtel, 1788).

⁴⁷ Hume, "Of National Characters", in *Philosophical Works*, Vol. III, p. 252 n. 1. On this see R. H. Popkin, "Hume's Racism", *The Philosophical Forum* IX (1977-1978), pp. 211-226, and "Hume's Racism Reconsidered", *The Journal* I, pp. 61-71 (repr. above).

mittees of the revolutionary governments he served on. The number of sane and serious projects he produced from 1789-93 is most impressive, and some became the basis for solving major problems in French society, like revamping the entire educational system. His proposed Constitution of 1793 became his undoing. Unlike Hume's preposterous, ponderous plan in the *Idea of a Perfect Commonwealth*. Condorcet's was being offered to establish a liberal democracy in a France that had just overthrown the monarchy. And Condorcet's plan was supported by the moderates who were being crushed. The final picture of the vast difference between the two great social scientists of the Enlightenment comes out in their final words on the French Revolution: Condorcet's ringing testament to the Enlightenment, the *Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, written while he was in hiding during the Reign of Terror, and Hume's *Histoire de la Révolution française*, put together by Joseph de Maistre from texts in Hume's *History of England*.

In the *Esquisse* Condorcet, in the face of monumental counter-evidence, far worse than Hume had witnessed or imagined, set out a careful statement of the epistemology behind the progress theory, and then presented his ten stages of human progress. The ninth dealt with the period "Depuis Descartes jusqu'à la formation de la République française",⁴⁸ and the tenth with "Des progrès futurs de l'esprit humain". Condorcet traced the basic steps by which modern science and rational thinking replaced superstition through the natural progress of civilization. In discussing what happened in England and Scotland, Condorcet named people who contributed to perfecting human understanding of man and nature. Hume, *bien sûr*, is not mentioned, even in the brief criticism of historians.⁴⁹

With the Reign of Terror taking its daily toil, wars all over the globe, Condorcet, a renegade in hiding from the authorities, could look forward to a future in which the inequality of nations would disappear, in which there would be progress towards a brotherhood of men, and "enfin le perfectionnement réel de l'homme".⁵⁰ In contemplating this, one receives the prize for one's efforts for the progress of reason and the defense of liberty, in spite of the crimes, errors and injustices with which the earth is sullied. Condorcet ended his text with the vision of "un asile, où le souvenir de ses persécutions ne peut

⁴⁸ Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un Tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, texte révu et présenté par O. H. Prior, Nouvelle édition présenté par Yvon Belaval (Paris, 1970).

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 201.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

le poursuivre; où, vivant par la pensée avec l'homme rétabli dans les droits comme dans la dignité de sa nature, il oublie celui que l'avidité, la crainte ou l'envie tourmentent et corrompent; c'est là qu'il existe véritablement avec ses semblables, dans un élysée que sa raison a su se créer, et que son amour pour l'humanité embellit des plus pures jouissances."⁵¹ Hume could only fret about the annoyances, and cast doubt on this wonderful vision of human perfectability.

Condorcet died March 27-28, 1794, either killed by the authorities who captured him, or by suicide. His masterpiece, the *Esquisse*, was published in 1795 and "officially adopted as the philosophical manifesto of Post-Thermidorian reconstruction when the Convention voted funds to distribute copies throughout France". The arch reactionary, Louis de Bonald, called the work the "apocalypse of the new gospel", and it became a classic of the liberal democratic ethos that survived and developed after the French Revolution.⁵² In contrast, one of the leaders of the reactionary intellectuals denouncing the Revolution, Joseph de Maistre, saw in Hume the prophet of the Counter-Revolution, an "orthodox" historian, whose diagnosis of human nature helped understand the disaster France was living through.⁵³ In his *Considerations sur la France* of 1796, de Maistre included a "posthumous" work, as the concluding chapter, entitled *Fragment d'une histoire de la révolution française par David Hume*. Hume's negative analysis of the Puritan Revolution made him a hero of the Counter-Revolutionists in France.⁵⁴

In sum, Hume's interaction with Turgot and Condorcet may have had the fruitful methodological consequences Keith Baker has claimed. Hume may also have been a useful historical authority for the French reformers on certain matters. But when he and Turgot made clear their differences over the perfectibility of human nature, they drifted apart ideologically. Condorcet's omission of Hume from the *Vie de Turgot* and the *Esquisse* indicate that he had no place in Condorcet's grand picture of the progress of the human race. Hume was too sceptical and cynical, too much a creature of the society and politics of his time to see the grand picture. So Hume, then and now, has been a hero to conservative or reactionary political thinkers, while Condorcet has been the inspiration of the optimistic liberals.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

⁵² Baker, *op. cit.*, p. 343. The source given for Bonald's remark is his *Observations sur un ouvrage posthume de Condorcet, intitulé Esquisse d'un tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, 1795.

⁵³ Bongie, *op. cit.*, p. 161.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 77 n. 1.

Hume never really applied his methodological discovery, if such it was, to serious human problems. He offered sad, serious evaluations of the very limited ability of men to improve their lot. Condorcet, encouraged by Turgot, may have seen the methodological discovery as a crucial tool to accomplish what Hume doubted could be done, to improve and ultimately, hopefully, perfect the human world. The ‘apocalypse’ dreamed of by Condorcet would, if achievable, be a great improvement over the human stagnation portrayed by Hume, or the ‘nuclear apocalypse’ predicted by so many of our contemporaries.

VI

THE THIRD FORCE IN SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY THOUGHT: SCEPTICISM, SCIENCE AND MILLENARIANISM*

The philosophical battle of the seventeenth-century is usually presented as a contest between two philosophies—Cartesian rationalism and British empiricism—each of which was set forth in order to justify “the new science”. Thinkers who do not fit in these categories are usually ignored or treated as strange, unrelated figures, as one finds in the discussion of Herbert of Cherbury, Gassendi, Hobbes, the Cambridge Platonists, Kenelm Digby, John Seargent, and Comenius, among others.

Over the last thirty years I have sought to show that the new philosophy arose as a way of dealing with a sceptical crisis that engulfed European thought during the Reformation, reinforced by the revival of ancient Greek scepticism and its presentation in modern form by Montaigne. Other scholars have joined me in tracing the new sceptical movement from Montaigne and his cousin, Francisco Sanches, to Bayle, Hume, and various figures of the French Enlightenment. Many thinkers from Descartes to Kant have been shown to be reacting to the sceptical challenge and offering theories to combat it.

Recent research has led me to believe that there was another tradition, reacting to the same sceptical crisis. This tradition led to some of the strange combinations of new science and theology that developed during that century, especially among figures involved in the organized scientific endeavors in England, culminating in the thought of Sir Isaac Newton. Some of the group of thinkers whom I shall consider have been called “the spiritual brotherhood” by Charles Webster.¹ I am not sure this is the most appropriate name, since some of them were not so spiritual or brotherly. For want of a better name, I have called them “the third force”. As we shall see, they tend to combine elements of empirical and rationalist thought with theosophic

* I should like to thank James Force for discussing the ideas in this paper while I was developing them. I should also like to thank Harry Bracken, Amos Funkenstein, Richard Kroll and Robert Westman for their helpful reactions to my views, and for their suggestions and criticisms of them.

¹ Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration* (New York, 1975), chap. II.

speculations and Millenarian interpretation of Scripture. All of these elements were used to overcome the sceptical challenge.

One of the leading figures in this group, John Dury, was evolving his answer to scepticism just when Descartes was doing the same. They met, and each seemed unable to comprehend what the other was doing. Much the same occurred when Descartes had a summit conference with Comenius, or when Father Mersenne tried to relate these religio-scientific ideas to those of himself and his close friend, Father Gassendi. The greatest theorist of this group, Henry More, of the Cambridge Platonists, journeyed from complete scepticism to utter reliance on biblical prophecies, to Cartesianism, to a combination of neo-Platonism and Cabbalism. From this emerged a form of immaterialism best expressed by his friends, Lady Anne Conway and Isaac Newton. Leibniz, among others, drew heavily from the ideas of this group.

The thinkers I will consider worked mainly in Protestant countries—England, Holland, parts of Germany, and Scandinavia. They shared certain religious concerns, especially those relating to the imminent coming of the millennium. They saw the development of modern science as a crucial part of the preparation for the perfect world that was soon to begin. Their interpretation of the Bible, which was central for their other intellectual activities, emerged in part from their struggles with the new scepticism. Some of them wrote justification of their claim to certain knowledge about the future. Others found certainty in the personal and uninstitutional mysticism of Jacob Boehme (1575-1624) and some of his German predecessors who had found a simple and direct path to God. At least two members of this third-force group, Rev. William Twisse and Jan Amos Comenius, published their theories of knowledge, in which they contended that the epistemologies of their empirical and rationalist contemporaries could only lead back to scepticism. Henry More and Lady Conway each advanced a metaphysical theory that emerged from this view. They justified their metaphysical views against those of Descartes, Spinoza, and Hobbes. More and William Law, the English translator of Boehme, showed how these new metaphysical views and the ideas of Boehme enlightened Sir Isaac Newton and led to some of his great scientific picture of the world.

I have only traced what happened to this third force up to the end of the seventeenth century. In various forms the ideas of this group continued to be developed in the scientific Millenarianism of such figures as William Whiston, David Hartley, and Joseph Priestley; in the theosophic metaphysics of Hume's patron, Andrew Michael

Ramsey and Emmanuel Swedenborg, and many others. The fate of this strain of thought during the Enlightenment and afterwards will have to be left for further studies.

We will begin our story with the intellectual career of Joseph Mede (1586-1638). He revolutionized biblical interpretation with his key to the *Book of Revelation*. He came to his revolutionary discovery after a long bout with scepticism. Mede was a student at Christ's College, Cambridge, and then became a fellow and later professor there. He was the tutor of Henry More, Isaac Barrow (Newton's teacher), John Milton, and many other famous persons. His key to the *Book of Revelation* has remained a crucial part of the interpretative apparatus of Millennial thinkers up to the present time. He provided a calculating scheme for figuring out when the prophecies in the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* will be fulfilled.²

The most available edition of the *Works* of Mede, that of 1672, just mentions that he had been a Pyrrhonist in his student days, but overcame this.³ The earlier 1664 edition, edited by Mede's student, John Worthington, the Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge University for many years, gives an extended biographical sketch of Mede's development, drawn from his personal papers.⁴ We are told that when Mede began his studies at Cambridge in 1602 or 1603, he was "disquieted with *Scepticisme*, that troublesome and restless disease of the Pyrrhonian School of old". He apparently came across a copy of Sextus Empiricus's writings in another student's room and read it. This led him to raise strange questions and to doubt even if anything existed. He asked himself whether "the whole Frame of things, as it appears to us, were any more than a mere Phantasm or Imagination". (At this point in history, Descartes was just a lad of six or seven years of age.) We are told that Mede's life was being made uncomfortable "by

² On Mede's career and importance, see Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979), chap. VI; Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 542ff; and Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia* (Gloucester, Mass., 1972), pp. 76-85.

³ Joseph Mede, *The Works of Joseph Mede*, B. D. (London, 1672), "The Author's Life", p. ii.

⁴ John Worthington, "The Life of the Reverend and most learned Joseph Mede", in *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede* (London, 1664). On Worthington, who was Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge, and his role in seventeenth-century thought, see *The Diary and Correspondence of John Worthington*, in *Remains Historical and Literary connected with the Palatine Countries of Lancaster and Chester*, ed. James Crossley, published by the Chetham Society, Vols. XIII (1847), XXXVI (1855) and CXIV (1886).

those perplex'd Notions by which Pyrrho had industriously studied to represent the Habitation of Truth as inaccessible".⁵

But fortunately, Mede "quickly made his way out of these troublesome labyrinths". He became an acute logician, an accurate philosopher, a skillful mathematician, an excellent anatomist, a great philologist, a linguist, an historian; and he did much work in astrology (pp.III-IV). Finally, he discovered his resolution of his sceptical crisis in the truths he found in the *Book of Revelation*. Dr. Worthington did not wish to claim that Mede's interpretations of this text were infallible, since some of Mede's predictions of when the events described in *Revelation* would occur had already turned out not to be true. Instead, Worthington insisted that Mede had offered views that were "infinitely more probable than any lay'd down by those before him who sought to find out the meanings of the prophecies". Therefore he contended that Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*, when compared to other keys that had been offered, "seems most worthy to be deem'd *Clavis non errans*" (pp. XII-XIII).

Mede only published one book during his lifetime, the *Clavis Apocalyptica*.⁶ His immediate influence was apparently more due to his direct contacts with students and learned scholars in England and Holland.⁷

One of his students was Henry More (1614-1687), who started his studies at Cambridge on December 31, 1631, and remained there the rest of his life. In his brief autobiographical sketch, More said that he first studied the philosophies of Aristotle, Cardano and Julius Scaliger, among others. Most of what they said "seem'd to me either so *false* or *Uncertain*, or else so *obvious* and *trivial*". Four years of study of philosophy (up to 1635) "ended in nothing, in a manner, but mere Scepticism". When he was in this state, More wrote a poem in Greek, which he translated as follows:

...Know I

Nor whence, nor who I am, poor Wretch! Nor yet, O Madness! Whither I must go: But in Grief's crooked Claws fast held I lie; And live, I think, by force tugg'd to and fro. Asleep or wake all one, O Father *Jove*, 'Tis brave, we Mortals live in Clouds like thee. Lies, Night-dreams, empty Toys, Fear, fatal Love, This is my Life, I nothing else do see⁸

At this point, More began to wonder "whether the *Knowledge* of things was really that *Supreme Fecility* of Man, or something *Greater*

⁵ Worthington, "Life of Mede", in *Works*, 1664 ed., p. III.

⁶ Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica* (s.l., 1627) and (s.l., 1632).

⁷ A great deal of correspondence appears in Book IV of the *Works*, 1664 edition.

⁸ Richard Ward, *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More* (London, 1710), p. 10.

and *more Divine way*" (p.12), or whether it was to be found by reading various authors and contemplating the world, or perhaps by purging the mind of all kinds of vices. More began reading Platonic, Hermetic, and mystical authors, who indicated to him that purgation had to precede illumination from God. The resolution occurred when he came across "that Golden little book" (p.12), that had transformed young Martin Luther, the *Theologica Germanica*. This cured More of his deep melancholy and taught him to extinguish his will and to accept whatever God pleased to communicate to him. He gave himself over to the Divine Will, which gave him a new life or new birth, in which he discovered "greater Assurance than ever I could have expected". He moved into "a most *Joyous* and *Lucid* State of Mind; and such plainly is ineffable" (p. 15). Then he was able to go on to develop his philosophical theology, which would provide a theoretical basis for this third kind of view.

An additional description of how a sceptical crisis was overcome is very striking. The person undergoing this was John Dury (1596-1680), one of the active members of this scientific-religious group. He came from a Scottish Protestant family and studied at the French Reformed Seminary at Leiden at the same time as Peter Serrarius, later a patron of Spinoza's. Dury became a pastor in Cologne and afterwards in Elbing, an old Hanseatic city near Danzig. It was there that he met Comenius, Samuel Hartlib, and Johann Valentin Andreae. Comenius, the leader of the Moravian Brethren, was a refugee nearby from the Catholic conquests in the Thirty Years War. Hartlib, who soon went to England where he was busy all the time organizing scientific and religious activities, was from a merchant family in Elbing. Andreae was the reputed founder of the Rosicrucians and the author of the *Chemical Wedding*, one of their main statements.

A few years later Dury became the chaplain to Princess Mary of Holland, the daughter of James I of England. Dury was actively engaged in Millenarian politics throughout the Protestant world. For almost fifty years he personally tried to reunite all the evangelical churches in Europe and North America as a preparation for Jesus's Second Coming. He negotiated with various church and political leaders in the various countries where Protestantism flourished. He was also a central figure amongst those who were preparing for the conversion of the Jews and amongst those who were trying to encourage the growth of knowledge. Both of these ventures he saw as additional preparation for the Millennium. Dury was very widely known throughout the Republic of Letters. He was quite friendly with Menasseh ben Israel, a leading Amsterdam rabbi and Spinoza's

teacher. Dury, from the early 1630's until his death, was dashing from one conference to another, trying to advance his Millenarian projects. He returned to England during the Puritan Revolution, where he was extremely active in launching various reform projects in education and religion, and helped to prepare the scientific organization that preceded the Royal Society of England. He was married to Robert Boyle's aunt, and his daughter married Henry Oldenburg, Spinoza's friend and correspondent, who became the secretary of the Royal Society.⁹

Samuel Hartlib, who was a central figure in keeping contact with various people of the third-force outlook in England and elsewhere, preserved an immense correspondence, which is presently being studied by many scholars concerned with the history of ideas in the mid-seventeenth century.¹⁰ Among Hartlib's papers there is an account of a meeting between Descartes and Dury in Holland during the winter of 1634-35. Both of them were friends of Princess Elisabeth of Bohemia and met often at her home.¹¹ The Hartlib document presents us with Descartes, then working on the *Discourse on Method*.

"He discoursed with Mr. Dury complaining of the uncertainties of all things, which Dur. refuteth by the truths and certainty of those reports in Scripture and an infallible way of interpreting them which he [Descartes] denied. But being brought to many absurdities, left of. Indeed D. [Dury] hims [himself] was in great straits once in these very particulars. He could find no certainties almost in any thing, though he was able to discourse as largely of any thing as any other. Yet solidly and demonstratively he knew nothing; till he betooke hims. to the Scriptures and lighted upon an infallible way of interpreting them. He professeth that he could bene much with men and grant them a latitude of judgment and differences if they were honest and godly".¹²

⁹ On Dury and his career, see J. Minton Batten, *John Dury, Advocate of Christian Reunion* (Chicago, 1944); G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius* (London, 1947); and Charles Webster, *The Great Instauration*. Dury's relations with Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel are discussed in Cecil Roth, *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel* (Philadelphia, 1934), pp. 181 ff; and in David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982).

¹⁰ On Hartlib, see Turnbull, *op.cit.*, Charles Webster, Introduction to *Samuel Hartlib and the Advancement of Learning* (Cambridge, 1970); and H. Dircks, *A Biographical Memoir of Samuel Hartlib, Milton's Familiar Friend* (London, 1865).

¹¹ Batten, *op.cit.*, p. 95.

¹² This text is published in Turnbull, *op.cit.*, p. 167. It has also appeared in Cornelis de Waard, "Un Entretien avec Descartes en 1634 ou 1635", *Archives internationales d'Histoire des Sciences* VI (1953), pp. 14-16.

In this account, Descartes was still in his own sceptical crisis, while Dury had found a resolution to his own, but was unable to defend it against Descartes's criticisms. From other data, it seems that Dury's infallible way of interpreting Scripture came to him via Joseph Mede.

Mede lived quietly at Cambridge and made no effort to gain adherents to his Millenarian views. In his correspondence one finds that he sent his message out to a slowly widening group of people. Some of his correspondents, especially a Puritan divine, Dr. William Twisse, drew him out by asking questions, and sent his answers regarding the truths in the *Book of Daniel* and *Revelation* to those what should know about them. Very soon after Samuel Hartlib moved to England in 1630, he was in touch with Dr. Twisse, and apparently through him, with Mede himself. In March 1634 Hartlib wrote Mede that a person in Leiden liked his book *Clavis Apocalyptica*.¹³ Mede then sent Hartlib some papers indicating the basis for Mede's interpretations. In his covering letter, Mede said, "If Mr. Dury hath read my Book, you may communicate them [the papers] with him".¹⁴ Shortly thereafter Dury wrote to Mede and sought to get him to join the campaign to unite the evangelical churches.¹⁵

It appears that Dury found his infallible way of interpreting Scripture in Mede's published and unpublished writings. Descartes apparently challenged this claim to infallible certainty with the standard sceptical gambits, which Dury at the time could not answer. Hartlib encouraged his friend to complete a treatise which would state the rules for infallible scriptural interpretations and later on to write something in answer to Descartes.¹⁶ Dury never quite performed either of these tasks, but in 1651, in the preface to the translation of a German work by Abraham von Frankenberg. Jacob Boehme's biographer and leading disciple, also entitled *Clavis Apocalyptica*, he attempted to set down rules for judging interpretations of biblical prophecies. He stated some empirical historical rules, but then said these would not help without Divine Blessing, which would guarantee complete certainty.¹⁷

¹³ Samuel Hartlib to Joseph Mede, March 6, 1634, Epistle XLIV, in Mede, *Works*, 1664 ed., p. 984.

¹⁴ Mede to Hartlib, Epistle XLV, *Works*, p. 985.

¹⁵ John Dury to Mede, March 4, 1634/5, Epistle XLVI, *Works*, p. 985.

¹⁶ Hartlib's outline for Dury's treatise on the infallible rules for scriptural interpretation is given in Turnbull, *op.cit.*, p. 169.

¹⁷ John Dury, "An Epistolical discourse, from Mr. John Durie to Mr. Sam. Hartlib, concerning this Exposition of the Revelation, Nov. 28, 1650", preface to *Clavis Apocalyptica* (London, 1651), pp. 12-17.

Henry More, and his fellow Cambridge Platonists, offered clearer and more precise statements of the basis for this certainty. And, a quite elaborate analysis of the nature of human knowledge, leading to the claim that Mede's method of biblical interpretation was infallible, was developed by Dr. Twisse.

More and his Cambridge allies, John Smith and Benjamin Whichcote, lived through the Puritan Revolution. They were only too aware of the conflicting knowledge claims being made by the many different sectarians of the time. More, himself, was quite cautious about the way Jacob Boehme's mysticism was being accepted by many thinkers in England and Holland in the 1640's and 50's and was being used to justify various new religious movements, like the Quakers.¹⁸ Many people were appealing to an internal, individual certainty, based on supposed direct contact with the Spirit within, and as Boehme said, the God within. More's friend, Lady Anne Conway, and her doctor, Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, became Quakers. In 1656 More cautiously tried to critically evaluate many of the religious movements of the time in his *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus: or a Brief Discourse of the Nature, Causes, Kinds and Cure of Enthusiasm*.¹⁹

More saw enthusiasm as the opposite of inspiration and leading to atheism. He explained the difference as follows: *To be inspired is, to be moved in an extraordinary manner by the power or Spirit of God to act, speak, or think what is holy, just and true*; while enthusiasm is "*A Full, but false persuasion in a man that he is inspired.*" (Sec. II, p.2). This account would be fine if one could determine accurately whether one is inspired, or merely enthused. More, as we shall see, was able to recognize that there can be sceptical doubts about purported mathematical truths, but he could not discern any about his own inspired religious views.

Two of More's associates at Cambridge, John Smith and Benjamin Whichcote, tried to give a more complete delineation of the differences between enthusiasm and divine inspiration. Smith, in his dis-

¹⁸ Margaret Lewis Bailey, *Milton and Jakob Boehme* (New York, 1914), esp. pp. 91-93. See also Serge Hutin, *Les Disciples anglais de Jacob Boehme* (Paris, 1960). On More, see Hutin, *Henry More* (Hildesheim, 1966); and Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Conway Letters. The Correspondence of Anne Viscountess Conway, Henry More and their Friends 1642-1684* (New Haven, 1930), chap. 2, pp. 39 ff. More, in his short work on Boehme, *Philosophia Teutonicae Censura* (London, 1679), in More, *Opera Philosophia* (London, 1689), Vol. I, stated Question 1 as "*Utrum Jacobus Behmen infallibiter inspiratus esset?*" and indicated that he had his doubts. See p. 536.

¹⁹ Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus; or, a Brief Discourse on the Nature, Causes, Kinds and Cure of Enthusiasm* (London, 1662).

course, "Of Prophetie" sought to give an "Account of the Difference between the true Prophetical Spirit and Enthusiastical impostures". The "Pseudo-Prophetical Spirit is seated only in the Imaginative Powers and Faculties inferior to Reason" while "the True Prophetical Spirit seats it self as in the Rational Powers as in the Sensitive, and that it never alienates the mind, but informs and enlightens it".²⁰ Although Smith's explanation is only about prophecy, its account of the difference between inspired prophecy and enthusiasm can be seen as applying in general to distinguish divine inspiration from a human imitation—enthusiasm. Smith, like More, explains the second as being due to "melancholy and turgent Phansies" (*Ibid.*) He drew an expansion of how these led to false conceits from Maimonides' *Guide for the Perplexed*.

Smith insisted one feature of enthusiasm is that it "does not inform their Reason, nor elevate them to a true understanding of things in their coherence and contexture". Because of this failure, enthusiasts can "easily embrace things absurd to all true and sober Reason".²¹ Their imaginations are aroused but not their rational faculties. Presumably the rational person can tell whether his rational powers are being alienated or not. The prophetic spirit "alwaies maintains a consistency and clearness of Reason, strength and soliditie of Judgment ... it does not *ravish* the Mind" but informs and enlightens it. The pseudo-prophetic spirit never reaches this enlightened state, but remains in the passions of our fancy.²² It is guided by the Prince of Darkness who cannot function in the sphere of light and reason. The true Prophet can then know that he has received a command from heaven. A false one could know his message is false if he could set aside his self-conceit. If he cannot, then he will have hallucinations. So, the divine inspiration supposedly shows itself to reason—enthusiasm does not; and the rational person can tell the difference (pp.203, 206-07).

Benjamin Whichcote, in a discourse contending that those who are truly religious will be delivered from all dangerous errors about religion, stressed the need to be extremely cautious lest "we give advantage to the devil to put his delusions upon us" and make us

²⁰ John Smith, *Selected Discourses* (London, 1660), Discourse VI, "Of Prophetie", p. 190.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 193. In a paper given by Sarah Hutton at the 350th Anniversary of Spinoza's birth, at Amsterdam, November 1982, she showed some striking resemblances between Smith's discussion of prophecy and Spinoza's in the beginning of the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.

²² Smith, *op.cit.*, p. 197.

enthusiasts.²³ Our caution should begin from a recognition of our fallibility. Then, if we are modest and humble, our mind can be “brought into a disposition and *preparation* to receive all divine truth” (pp. 9-12). If we are cautious and limit our expectations, we can secure our minds against enthusiasm, against hot unsettled fancies and perplexed melancholy, and rest in the calm and distinct use of reason. In this state “Of holy things, men of holy hearts and lives speak with great assurance of the truth”. (p. 19)

Smith and Whichcote give us more detailed accounts of the rational aspect of inspiration and the irrational character of enthusiasm. But who is in a position to tell if he or she is really giving a rational or enthused view? To meet this still lingering sceptical problem, Dr. William Twisse offered a much more complete epistemological answer in his *The Doubting Conscience Resolved. In Answer to a pretended perplexing Question, etc. Wherein it is evidently proved, that the holy Scriptures (not the Pope) is the Foundation whereupon the Church is built. Or, That a Christian may be Infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion by the Holy Scripture*. The work was written at the request of Samuel Hartlib and published posthumously in 1652.²⁴ Twisse (1578[?]-1648) received his theological training at Oxford and wrote a powerful defense of strict Calvinism against Arminianism. He became a quite prominent Puritan leader and played a significant role in religious politics after 1640. In the Restoration his bones were removed from Westminster Abbey because of his role in the Puritan Revolution.²⁵

Twisse was apparently the first person to realize that Mede had made a monumental discovery, that the events predicted in *Daniel* and *Revelation* were actually beginning to occur in current history, and that the Millennium would soon begin. In fifteen letters to Mede from 1629-38, Twisse drew out the author of *Clavis Apocalyptica* concerning what he had in fact discovered.²⁶ After Mede's death, Twisse

²³ Benjamin Whichcote, *The Works of the Learned Benjamin Whichcote, D. D.* (London, 1761), Vol. II, p. 7.

²⁴ William Twisse, *The Doubting Conscience Resolved. In Answer to a (pretended) perplexing Question, & Wherein it is evidently proved that the Holy Scripture (not the Pope) is the Foundation whereupon the Church is built. Or that a Christian may be infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion by the Holy Scripture* (London, 1652). The Imprimatur by Edmund Calamy is dated May 3, 1652. This work was reprinted in the eighteenth century.

²⁵ Twisse was the prolocutor of the Westminster Assembly. The article on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography* gives the details of his career.

²⁶ These letters appear in Mede, *Works*, Book IV, pp. 927-1054. Prof. Mayir Vereté of The Hebrew University was the first to make me aware of Twisse's im-

published several of his works that had been circulating in manuscript form. Twisse added prefaces to these, spelling out the tremendous importance of Mede's discoveries in the future of mankind.

The translation of *Clavis Apocalyptica. The Key of the Revelation* was published in 1643 by order of the Committee of the House of Commons. Twisse, in the preface, commented on the interpretation he had learned (presumably from Mede) of Daniel 12:4, where it is said "Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". This, he said, meant that the opening of the world through navigation and commerce, and the increase of knowledge should occur at the same time, which any acute observer could tell was happening at that very moment. One momentous part of the increase of knowledge was Mede's interpretation of the *Book of Revelation*.²⁷ Twisse said he had heard rumors years before that Mede was claiming that the Reign of Christ on earth would soon begin. He began corresponding with Mede, who told him that after the Reformation had started, and the Antichrist, the Church of Rome, had been rebuffed, people had been able to begin to unravel the meanings of the prophecies in *Daniel* and *Revelation*. The Roman Church had maintained from ancient days that Millenarianism, the belief in the Thousand Years Earthly Reign of Christ, was a terrible heresy. But now this view could be revived since the Kingdom of the Antichrist was coming to an end.²⁸ (Henry More had said of this new understanding of Millennial prophecies that it is "of as much price and worth in Theologie, as either *The Circulation of the Blood in Physick*, or *The Motion of the Earth* in natural Philosophy".)

Twisse, in setting forth his epistemology, asked whether it is possible for men to have an infallible certainty of their faith from Scripture, and thereby have an unshakeable foundation for their religious knowledge. Opponents had raised doubts by pointing to the range of

portance in making Mede spell out his views and relate them to contemporary events.

²⁷ See Twisse's preface to Joseph Mede, *The Key of the Revelation, searched and demonstrated out of the Naturall and proper Characters of the Visions* (London, 1643), pp. A3-3v. (This is the English translation of Mede's *Clavis Apocalyptica*.)

²⁸ See Twisse's preface to Mede's *Apostacy of the Latter Times* (London, 1641), p. A2v. Twisse said he first came into contact with Mede when "a rumor spread of his opinion, concerning the glorious Kingdome of Christ here on earth, which many hundred yeares agoe was cryed downe as the Errour of the Millenaries". Mede had explained to Twisse in a letter dated November 11, 1629, that people had to be silent about the Millennium while the Antichrist reigned.

Henry More, *An Explanation of the Grand Mystery of Godliness* (London, 1660), p. xvi. More was speaking of Cudworth's lectures on the coming Millennium.

answers given by Catholics and different kinds of Protestants. Twisse, however, insisted that, difficulties notwithstanding, there can be a certain and infallible way of interpreting Scripture.³⁰ This way is very different from the way we know natural things. The reprobate and even the Papist can have knowledge of Scripture, "but to know the Scripture to be the Word of God, the Wisdom of God, and the Power of God, that I take to be peculiar to a regenerate spirit in whom the Spirit of God dwells as the formation of the life of grace".³¹ God can inspire the elect so that they are able to discern the meaning of prophecies and revelations "when the time comes appointed for the communication of this knowledge". (pp. 86-87) The time is apparently at hand. Daniel's prediction is being fulfilled. People are moving all around the world, and knowledge is increasing. An aspect of the increase of knowledge is "a strange progress made in opening the mysteries of the Revelation and other mysterious Prophecies of the Old Testament". (p.87) As an example, Twisse pointed to the recent realization that number 666 on the Beast in *Revelation* indicated that the Pope is that Antichrist. (Mede had said that this "discovery" by Francis Potter "was the greatest discovery that hath been made since the world began".)³² He also pointed to the signs that the beginning of the Millennium was imminent. Even the Prophets did not know about these mysteries, because they did not need to know then. However, "God had appointed a certain time when the light of them should break forth to irradiate his Church with unspeakable consolation, when they stood most in need thereof, the accomplishments of these Prophecies, drawing neer".³³ Now, as the climax of world history is about to occur, the elect are able to understand more and more about nature and Scripture. "For as light naturally increaseth more and more untill it be perfect day; so it hath been with light spirituall". (pp.91-94; the quotation is on pp. 93-94)

We get to know the true faith by spiritual illumination that comes from the Spirit of God. Each person receives illumination individually and cannot communicate it to others. (p.100) The illumination is true because it come from God. "Now when the Spirit of God inlightens me, the things I imbrace is not my opinion, but my faith, and my

³⁰ Twisse, *The Doubting Conscience Resolved*, pp. 1-15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 74. Twisse had said earlier that natural reason and natural instruction may be sufficient to understand a man's writings, "yet onely supernaturall illumination is sufficient to inable a man to discern the things of God," p. 32.

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 89-90. Mede's remark, which appears in his *Apostacy of the Latter Times*, p. a3 was included as a foreword to Potter's book, *The Number of the Beast*.

³³ Twisse, *The Doubting Conscience Resolved*, p. 91.

persuasion herein is in steadfastness and nothing inferior to natural knowledge but superior rather ... for it is one thing to hear the voice of man, another to hear the voice of God". (pp.101-02)

It might not be possible to find demonstrable knowledge from Scripture. However, we can gain enough certainty concerning theological truths so that we can accept them and reject heresies. Beyond this there is "the illumination of the Spirit, giving one new eyes (as it were) and opening the eyes of my understanding, that I may see and discern the things of God, and that holy Spirit is able to free me from all doubt". (pp.104-05; the quotation is on p. 105) Thus scepticism is overcome by this divine illumination. It removes all doubts and yields infallible knowledge. This knowledge increases as the Millennium draws near. However, since this knowledge comes from illumination by the Spirit, it is private and cannot be communicated to other persons (p.121).

Basing the guarantee of knowledge on each person's personal experience of Divine Illumination, Twisse then set forth an epistemology like that that could be developed from the writings of Jacob Boehme, who was described as "the God-Taught philosopher," who claimed to find all knowledge in the Divine Spirit within him—"we may with good ground say, That I am in Christ, and Christ is become Man in Me". Our knowledge consists in the Spirit and will of God, found in ourselves. The Divine drama, the life of Christ, are descriptions of what takes place within a regenerated person. Boehme was chosen to express this message and to make people see the truth within. As his first English translator said in 1649, in Boehme's works "the footsteps and characters of *Divine Light* and *knowledge* are therein imprinted".³⁴ Boehme expressed the divine illumination he had found.

The question of whether divine inspiration could be illusory was brushed aside by Twisse as it had been by the Cambridge Platonists. Enthusiasm is false inspiration, caused by the fancy or by melancholy. Each reasonable and/or holy person can tell in and for himself if he is genuinely inspired. (Henry More had his doubts that Boehme had received infallible inspiration, but he knew that he, More, had.) A half century later the Earl of Shaftesbury, Anthony Ashley Cooper, could point out in his "A Letter concerning Enthusiasm": "Nor can Divine Inspiration, by its outward Marks, be easily distinguished from [enthusiasm]". To judge if an inspiration is from God, we have to

³⁴ See Franz Hartmann, *The Life and Doctrine of Jacob Boehme, the God-Taught Philosopher* (Boston, 1891), p. 261. See the excellent study by Alexandre Koyré, *La Philosophie de Jacob Boehme* (Paris, 1929). The seventeenth-century English editions all make extravagant claims about the author.

judge by our own Spirit, which may be "sedate, cool and impartial" or may just be passion and melancholy.³⁵ And, it is here that certainty seems to elude us. Individually we may be satisfied, but can we be sure that we are right?

In England and Holland in the mid-seventeenth century there were all sorts of religious preachers and prophets who were sure they were right and were sure they were in direct contact with the Divine world. Some were willing to reject the Bible as merely human writing that could not be as reliable as direct religious experience. The learned Quaker, Samuel Fisher, tried to undermine confidence in the text or letter of Scripture by raising all sorts of sceptical problems, while insisting that the Word of God as spoken to men all over the planet was completely reliable.³⁶

Refuting scepticism by appealing to Divine inspiration was seen by many as linked to scientific research and as the reason for advancing learning through scientific work. Dury, Hartlib, and Comenius played important roles in developing scientific activities, as Charles Webster has shown in his work, *The Great Instauration*.³⁷ Their efforts led directly or indirectly to the establishment of the Royal Society, whose members included the giants of the "new science", Robert Boyle, Robert Hooke, Isaac Newton and Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz.³⁸

One of the most important theoreticians of this new scientific outlook was Johann Amos Comenius (1592-1670), the leader of the Moravian Brethren. A Czech by birth, he spent much of his life in exile in Western Europe because of the Thirty Years War and later the Swedish invasion of Poland.³⁹ He apparently met Dury and Hartlib in 1630, when Dury was a pastor in Elbing and Hartlib one of his

³⁵ Anthony Ashley Cooper, "A Letter concerning Enthusiasm", *Characteristicks of Men, Manners, Opinions, Times*, 2nd edition (London, 1714), p. 54: "For to judg whether the Spirits they are of God, we must antecedently judg our own Spirit, whether it be of Reason and sound Sense, whether it be fit to judg at all, by being sedate, cool and impartiall: free of every byassing Passion, every giddy Vapour, or melancoly Fume. This is the first knowledge and previous Judgment".

³⁶ See Samuel Fisher, *The Rustic Alarm to the Rabbies* (London, 1660). Christopher Hill, in his survey of the diversity of views in this period in *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), pp. 213-215, called Fisher the most radical Bible critic of the time. Fisher probably knew Spinoza. See R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza, the Quakers and the Millenarians, 1656-1658", *Manuscripta* VI (1982), pp. 113-133.

³⁷ Webster, *The Great Instauration*.

³⁸ The precise debt the Royal Society owed to Dury, Hartlib and Comenius has been a matter of debate for the last three centuries.

³⁹ On Comenius' career, see Matthew Spinka, *John Amos Comenius, that Incomparable Moravian* (Chicago, 1943).

parishioners. Hartlib then went to England, where he quickly became a central figure in the intellectual life there. He got to know leading scientists, theologians and politicians, and was soon organizing all sorts of projects. He came to know Twisse and Mede and was put in contact with Dury, who had moved to Holland. Comenius travelled around Germany, Scandinavia and Holland, and began publishing his works that would revolutionize education. It is estimated that by 1650 half of the textbooks in use in Europe and America were by him. In 1641 he was called to England to attempt to put his theories into effect.⁴⁰ His theories were both educational and Millenarian, as we shall see, and were part of a theosophic vision. He also received special information from his private personal prophet about when the Millennium would begin.

Comenius's theory of knowledge appears in two works that were published in English in England in 1651. One is entitled *Natural Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light: or A Synopsis of Physicks by J. A. Comenius; Exposed to the censure of those that are lovers of Learning, and desire to be taught by God. Being a view of the World in general, and of particular Creatures therein contained, ground upon Scripture Principles*.⁴¹ The second work is *A Pattern of Universal Knowledge. In a plaine and true Draught; or a Diatyposis*.⁴² Here Comenius presented his answer to Pyrrhonism, claiming that we could reach mathematical certainty by using the right method. Every truth can be demonstrated by its own nature. Every pansophical thing (that is, feature of universal knowledge), is demonstrable by the power of the method. This method consists in accurately grading truths, by which we will discover truths through their causes.⁴³

The method for doing this is developed in *Natural Philosophie Reformed by Divine Light*. Comenius said he was led to his method by reading Luis Vives, Tommaso Campanella, and Francis Bacon. Vives attacked Scholasticism but did not offer an adequate substitute. Campanella offered a new theory of the world, and he defended Galileo, but his views were too dubious. In Bacon's *Instauratio Magna*, Comenius

⁴⁰ On this part of Comenius' career, see Webster, *The Great Instauration*; and Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius*.

⁴¹ Johann Amos Comenius, *Natural Philosophie Reformed by the Divine Light*. . . (London, 1651). The work is dedicated "To the truly studious of wisdom, from Christ the fountain of wisdom, greeting".

⁴² Comenius, *A Pattern of Universal Knowledge. In a plaine and true Draught: or a Diatyposis* (London, 1651), translated by Jeremy Collier.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 144-145. The section following this presents a detailed account of how this is to be done.

saw "a most bright beam in a new age of Philosophies now arising". Bacon has found the true key, but had not actually opened up the secrets of Nature. But from Bacon's work, Comenius said that now he himself was so enlightened "that some great secrets of Nature, and very obscure places of Scripture were now plain".⁴⁴ As a result, he realized three important points: (1) "*That the onely true, genuine and plain way of Philosophie is to fetch all things from sense, reason and Scripture*", (2) that Scholastic philosophy is defective, and (3) "That all things that are and are made, to sense, reason and Scripture, with so much evidence and certainty . . . that any mortall man seeing may see, and feeling may feel, the truth scattered every where".⁴⁵

All knowledge begins with sense information, but the senses are often confounded as is shown by sense illusions and deceptions. Therefore, we have to use reason "to supply the defect of sense and correct its errors". But many things are remote from both sense and reason. In these cases we are indebted to the grace of God for His Word in which He has revealed to us some of the secrets we need to know. Thus, we require a conjunction of sense, reason, and Scripture (preface, p. 10). If we relied only on our senses, we would be no wiser than the ordinary man. We would not be able to imagine that the moon is smaller than a star, or that the sun is larger than the earth. If we relied only on reason, we would be dealing only with abstractions or "meer phantasmes", and would create an imaginary world. If we only listened to Scripture without the aid of sense or reason, we might become carried away, or become involved in matters beyond our understanding (preface, p. 11). So Comenius contended, we must conjoin Divine Revelation, Reason, and Sense, if we are to have belief, understanding and certainty. The senses provide evidence. Reason gains certainty the more it is based on the senses. Reason, however, also corrects the senses when the senses judge incorrectly about apparently illusory data. In the same way *Revelation* corrects reason when the latter reaches false views about invisible matter. When these corrections occur, reason is not contrary to sense, nor faith to reason (preface, p. 12, 14).

Comenius insisted that sense is the source of knowledge and certainty concerning natural things, and understanding is the means of attaining knowledge and certainty about revealed things. Sense and reason can be used to contemplate the wonderful things God has created, but they do not teach us about eternal things. These are known

⁴⁴ Comenius, *Naturall Philosophie Reformed by the Divine Light*, preface. The quotations are on the 7th and 8th unnumbered pages.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, preface, p. 8, 9.

by the Word of God. Scripture does not tell us about grammar, logic, mathematics, and physics, but it does teach us other kinds of wisdom. Thus, it can be said that "Philosophy is lame without divine Revelation" (preface, p. 23). So we should follow the dictates of sense, reason, and Scripture (preface, pp. 15-23).

Comenius, like Twisse, pointed to the progress of human knowledge that was occurring. Aristotle had only lived at the world's infancy. Thus, no matter how great an intellect he was (even if he had been "the Generalissimo of Philosophers"), he could not find all truths (preface, pp. 24-25). Campanella and Bacon had shown that he was wrong about many matters. He was, after all, a heathen. "Is the light of Hierusalem so put out, that we must needs borrow lamps at Athens?"⁴⁶ Comenius reminded his readers that when Aristotle's views were in the ascendancy in Europe, there were needless disputes, many, many heresies, and the Antichrist ruled the world (preface, p. 28).

Some people fear giving up Aristotelian philosophy because they will have nothing else to believe in. But, "if we shall hearken to God alone speaking by Nature, and by his Word . . . then how solid easie and delightfull will all things be! when the whole course of Philosophy will not consist in opinions but in truth" (preface, p. 30).

To achieve this, method is needed. Things should be understood only if they are clear. Only Baconian method and the guidance of divine Scripture should be employed. Everything should be set out by "*the Guidance of God, the Light of Reason, and the Testimonie of Sense*" (preface, p. 35). Many doubts and disputes will then be eliminated, our understanding increased, and inventions created (preface, pp. 35-38).

Most of this work of Comenius deals with detailing his natural philosophy. Most information comes from sense and reason, but some matters are beyond them, for example, how the world was first produced, or how invisible beings are constituted. Therefore, the Mosaic account of Creation should be accepted, while accepting what sense and reason tell us. "Therefore let us resolve upon this, that we view naturall things, to rest upon no other authority besides that of the Workmaster of nature and of nature her self (as she holds forth herself to be touched and felt). The Scriptures, sense and reason shall be our Guides, Witnesses and Dictators, to the Testimonies of which he that assents not shows himself very foolish and vain".⁴⁷

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, preface, p. 26, 27; the quotation is on p. 27.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, text, pp. 5-8; the quotation is on p. 8.

Comenius held to Millenarian views similar to others discussed in this paper. He sent a manuscript to Hartlib and Dury claiming that the prophesied events would begin in 1655.⁴⁸ Like Dury and Hartlib, he believed there were things to be done in preparing for this. In 1641 he travelled to London to join Dury and Hartlib, John Wilkins, and Robert Boyle, among others, in planning for the great events to come.⁴⁹ On October 1, 1641 he wrote out a document, raising five questions: "(1) What is the special good which is hoped for?, (2) Whence can such a change be hoped for?, (3) What is involved in this change and what parts of it can be entrusted to human industry?, (4) Whether it is lawful and right to use the help of secular power to promote these things, (5) What in particular does our strength and our opportunities bid us, who are deliberating these things, do now?"⁵⁰

Comenius's answers were: (1) the hope is that the time is approaching when the Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached throughout the world, and universal peace established. (2) The change can be hoped for from the rise of a light to which the eyes of the people of the whole world will be turned. The light will be from rays of the lanterns of human conscience, rational consideration of God's creation, law and will. (3) Human industry can make prayers and supplications to God, and spread pious thoughts to others. (4) "It is lawful and right to use the help of the secular power for these purposes," but until society is ready, the work should be undertaken by those who know that Christ's reign on earth will commence soon. (5) Such people should undertake to educate youth in one particular kingdom in a more Christian way in both piety and sound learning. This educational reform should be begun in England. Along with this the believers should bring about ecclesiastical peace. And, they should also collect the truth about things and make it known. They should attain pansophia, or Universal Knowledge (pp. 358-59).

Comenius proposed dividing up the work involved in this vast program. He himself would reform education. Hartlib would establish a

⁴⁸ This is the work Dury and Hartlib put out in an English translation, with the title, *Clavis Apocalyptica*. Hugh Trevor-Roper claimed that this work was by Abraham von Frankenburg, Boehme's disciple, biographer and editor, who was a close friend of Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel. See Trevor-Roper, "Three Foreigners: the Philosophers of the Puritan Revolution", in *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967), p. 292n.

⁴⁹ On this see Webster, *The Great Instauration*, pp. 48-51; and Trevor-Roper's "Three Foreigners". See also Robert F. Young, *Comenius in England* (New York, 1971).

⁵⁰ Turnbull, *op.cit.*, p. 358.

college in London for developing universal knowledge, with Comenius as its leader. Hartlib would bring all the scientists to work together to achieve this universal knowledge. And Dury would unite all the evangelical churches into one peaceful group and would prepare for the conversion of the Jews.

Trevor-Roper has portrayed Comenius, Dury, and Hartlib as three foreigners who "together may perhaps be called, both in their limited practical aims and their wild, bloodshot mysticism, the real philosophers, the only philosophers, of the Puritan revolution".⁵¹ This may be overstating their role, but they were brought together in England by Parliament, and were patronized by the leading political and ecclesiastical figures of the the puritan world.

Parliament did consider the establishment of the proposed college with an international faculty. However, because of the turmoil caused by events in Ireland, nothing came of the matter. A few months later, Governor Winthrop of the Massachusetts Bay Colony apparently invited Comenius to be the president of the new Harvard College, and to make it the center of the educational revolution, where both Indians and colonists would be trained to attain universal knowledge. For better or worse, Comenius decided to stay in the Old World, and under Dutch and Swedish auspices set to work preparing new textbooks for all kinds of subjects. Just before he left England, he, Dury, and Hartlib signed a compact to try to promote ecclesiastical peace, educate Christian youth, and reform education.⁵²

On his way back, Comenius had a meeting with Descartes at the castle of Endegeest near Leiden.⁵³ A couple of years earlier, efforts had been made to enlist Descartes's friend Mersenne in the third-force movement. After Mersenne had looked over Comenius's program for attaining universal knowledge, he wrote to Theodore Haak, an ally of Hartlib's in London: "As to the philosophy of M. Amos, you can tell him that we have M. Gassendi in Provence who is preparing a philosophy in which all that one can ever know is contained, and that he also can see the method of M. Descartes . . . where he will find the most heroic program there ever was, in my opinion".⁵⁴ If Mersenne

⁵¹ Trevor-Roper, "Three Foreigners", p. 240.

⁵² Turnbull, *op.cit.*, pp. 359-70; and Trevor-Roper, *op.cit.*, pp. 262-74.

⁵³ Cf. H. -J. De Vleeschauer, "Descartes et Comenius", *Travaux du IXe Congrès International de Philosophie* (Paris, 1937), pp. 109-114; and C. Louise Thijssen-Schoute, *Nederlands Cartesianisme* (Amsterdam, 1954), pp. 615-618. Young, *op.cit.*, quotes Comenius's description of the meeting, as does Thijssen-Schoute.

⁵⁴ Marin Mersenne to Theodore Haak, 1 November 1639, in *Correspondance de Mersenne*, ed. Cornélis de Waard (Paris, 1963), Tome VIII, p. 583.

preferred Gassendi's breath of knowledge and Descartes's method to Comenius's proposals, Descartes fought for his system against Comenius in their four-hour encounter. Descartes, we are told, defended his physics and metaphysics, and even more his theory of eternal truths and of the rational basis of faith. Comenius in reply contended that man's intelligence was too imperfect to attain any truth by its own means, and consequently all certitutte rested finally on divine revelation. The two great thinkers parted with Descartes complaining that Comenius was mixing up religion and science, and Comenius fearing that Descartes's views would lead to scepticism and irreligion.⁵⁵ From then on they moved further and further apart in their views.

Meanwhile, Dury and Hartlib published a pamphlet for the Committee for Religion in the High Court of Parliament, entitled *Englands Thankfulnessse*, against Catholicism, and with plans to bring about Church unity, to improve religious knowledge, and to prepare for the conversion of the Jews, which they expected to take place in 1656.⁵⁶ One of the proposals was "A care to make Christianity lesse offensive, and more knowne unto the Jewes, then now it is, and the Jewish State and Religion as it now standeth more known unto Christians". If each side knew more about the other, the Jews would be treated better, and then would see the light and convert.⁵⁷ During the next several years they encouraged the publication and translation of many major Jewish religious works. They were also very active in the effort in 1655 to gain readmission for the Jews to England (where the Millenarians thought the Jews would surely convert when they realized

⁵⁵ Comenius described the meeting in his answer to Samuel Desmarets, *Continuatio admonitionis fraternae de temperando charitate zelo ad S. Maresius* (Amsterdam, 1669). As cited by Young, *op.cit.*, p. 50, Comenius said, "We exchanged speech for about four hours, he expounding to us the mysteries of his philosophy, I myself maintaining all human knowledge, such as derived from the senses alone, and reasonings thereon to be imperfect and defective. We parted in friendly fashion: I begging him to publish the principles of his philosophy (which principles were published the year following), and he similarly urging me to mature my own thoughts, adding this maxim, "Beyond the things that appertain to philosophy, I go not, mine therefore is that only in part, whereof yours is the whole".

⁵⁶ *Englands Thankfulnessse, or An Humble Remembrance presented to the Committee for Religion in the High Court of Parliament . . .* (London, 1642). There is some question whether Hartlib or Dury wrote it. The work is very rare, and has been reprinted in Webster, *Samuel Hartlib and the Advancement of Learning*, pp. 96-97.

⁵⁷ Webster, *Samuel Hartlib*, p. 95. I have written a study of Dury's plan for a college of Judaic studies: "The First College for Jewish Studies", *Revue des Études Juives* 143 (1984), pp. 351-364.

what pure Protestant Christianity was like).⁵⁸ They were in active cooperation with the Dutch philo-Semites who took Spinoza in after his excommunication.⁵⁹

Hartlib remained in England and sought during the Civil War and Cromwell's reign to launch the scientific society that would attain universal knowledge. He kept up his vast correspondence with those allied in this Millennial scientific venture in England and abroad. When Hartlib was on his deathbed at the beginning of the Restoration, Charles II granted a charter to the Royal Society. Dury's son-in-law, Henry Oldenburg, took over Hartlib's role and became the secretary of this scientific society. Oldenburg visited Spinoza in Holland in 1661, and in their subsequent correspondence lasting over fifteen years, he told Spinoza of the important work the Society was doing and sought Spinoza's approval and support.⁶⁰ Dury spent most of the remainder of his life carrying on negotiations to unify the Protestant churches. He also worked on various programs to aid in the conversion of the Jews and persuaded leading Hebraists to labor with him. He was on very friendly terms with Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel and used some of his material as exciting evidence that the Lost Tribes

⁵⁸ See David S. Katz, *Philosemitism and the Readmission of the Jews*, references to Dury and Hartlib; and my paper on "The First College of Jewish Studies".

⁵⁹ They were closely involved with Adam Boreel, the leader of the Collegiants in Amsterdam, and with Peter Serrarius, one of the leading Millenarians in Holland. Boreel knew Boyle and Oldenburg, Dury's nephew and son-in-law respectively, and Serrarius was the actual contact between Spinoza and both Oldenburg and Boyle. See R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza and the Conversion of the Jews", in C. De Deugd, *Spinoza's Political and Theological Thought* (Amsterdam, 1984).

⁶⁰ See the letters of Henry Oldenburg to Spinoza in 1661-1662 in A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, Vol. I (Madison and Milwaukee, 1965), esp. letter #245 of July 1662, pp. 470-473.

There is an ongoing debate about whether the Royal Society grew out of the Invisible College, initiated by Comenius, Dury and Hartlib. Some of the original group, such as Boyle and Wilkins, were leaders of the Royal Society, and Oldenburg and Boyle were close relatives of Dury. However, during the Restoration, the Royal Society tried to distance itself from the ardent Puritanism of Dury and Hartlib. Meric Casaubon's attack on the Royal Society shows that, to a contemporary opponent, the scientific movement from Dury to Glanvill looked like a continuous development. On this see Michael R. G. Spiller, *Concerning Natural Experimental Philosophie, Meric Casaubon and the Royal Society* (The Hague, 1980). Francis Yates saw both the Invisible College and the Royal Society as developing from the Rosicrucians. Cf. her *Rosicrucian Enlightenment* (London, 1972), chap. XIII, pp. 171-191.

had been found in America. This presumably heralded the imminent commencement of the Millennium.⁶¹

The infallible acceptance of Scriptural prophecies, based upon one's complete assurance provided by the Spirit of God within, overcame sceptical doubts for these thinkers. It led them to attempt to increase knowledge as a preparation for the Millennium; and this, in turn, played an important part in the development of organized scientific activity in England and other parts of Protestant Europe.

Most of the thinkers discussed up to now largely lacked a metaphysical theory. They tended to be eclectic and put together various theosophical ideas with materials taken from Boehme, Bacon, and others. Dury apparently made some efforts to answer Descartes's theory, but his results have not been found. He offered a slight outline of a metaphysical theory in his "Essay of a Modell of said Body of Divinity".⁶²

A full-fledged metaphysical theory for the third-force view was offered by Henry More. He had studied with Joseph Mede, and then became his colleague at Christ's College, Cambridge. As mentioned earlier, after he had overcome his personal sceptical crisis through discovering religious truth, he developed his own philosophical view from Platonic and neo-Platonic ideas, from views of his colleague, Ralph Cudworth, from views out of the Cabbala, and from views developed in framing an answer to Descartes. At first More had been a very enthusiastic follower of Descartes and was probably his first English disciple. He corresponded with Descartes shortly before the latter left Holland for Sweden. Slowly he began to challenge Descartes's theory of matter, questioning whether events in the physical world could be explained if matter consisted of extension.

More expected his criticism of materialism to counter the views of Hobbes, Gassendi and Spinoza.⁶³ Since he himself was a strong

⁶¹ On this see Katz, *op.cit.*, chap. 4, esp. pp. 142-57; Lucien Wolf, *Menasseh ben Israel's Mission to Oliver Cromwell* (London, 1901), pp. xxiii-xxviii; and Cecil Roth, *Life of Menasseh ben Israel*, pp. 182-186.

⁶² All that we know about Dury's answer to Descartes appears in Turnbull, *op. cit.*, pp. 168 and 301. Dury's "And an Essay of a Modell of said Body of Divinity" appears in his *The Earnest Breathing of Foreign Protestants, Divines & Others: to the Ministers and other able Christians of these three Nations, for a Compleat Body of Practicall Divinity* (London, 1658). Here he listed the metaphysical assumptions a rational person would have to accept to prove that there is a God.

⁶³ See Hutin, *Henry More*, pp. 90-108; and Henry More, "The Preface General" to *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings of Dr. Henry More* (London, 1662); and *An Antidote to Atheism, The Immortality of the Soul*, and the *Letters to Descartes* that are contained in the *Collection*.

believer in the new science, he sought to provide an adequate metaphysics for it, a spiritualistic account of the world, relating together the activities of a living God, a world of active spirits, and the mathematical laws of the new sciences. More retained a healthy scepticism about the degree of assurance one could attain about scientific or philosophical matters. He even contended that valid mathematical inferences could be doubted, since our faculties might not be reliable (a point developed by his more sceptical friend, Joseph Glanvill). More treated his own interpretation of the world as conjectural, but no more certain than mathematics.⁶⁴

More's critical work is extremely impressive. He showed the inadequacy of the views of many of his contemporaries and offered a striking alternative. Nevertheless, any work of More's makes a twentieth century reader wonder if he was completely sane, since in these writings he defends all sorts of superstitious views about witchcraft, ghosts, etc., and develops strange readings of biblical texts and gives cabalistic accounts of the origin and nature of the world. The table of contents of most of his works includes hard-core philosophy, as well as bizarre excursions into the occult, the mystical, and the incredible. In these works he set down a metaphysics of the spiritual world, encompassing both the scientific views and the biblical beliefs of his third-force contemporaries.

During More's Cartesian period, Descartes wrote a letter to the English ambassador in Holland telling him how well Cartesianism agreed with the cosmology of *Genesis*. Descartes stated: "I am about to describe the birth of the world, in which I hope to comprehend the greatest part of physics. And I will tell you that after four or five days, in rereading the first chapter of *Genesis*, I have found as if by miracle that it can all be explained according to my imagination . . . My new philosophy is in much better agreement with all the truths

⁶⁴ Cf. Brian P. Copenhaver, "Jewish Theologies of Space in the Scientific Revolution: Henry More, Joseph Raphson, Isaac Newton and their Predecessors", *Annals of Science* 37 (1980), pp. 515-516. In More's *An Antidote to Atheism. Or, An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man whether there be not a God* (London, 1655), he said that his argument for the existence of God can be doubted, just as mathematical proofs can be. "For it is possible that *Mathematical evidence* itself may be but a constant undiscoverable delusion, which our nature is necessarily and perpetually obnoxious unto". Book I, chap. ii, p. 3. However, if one accepts the hypothesis that our faculties are true, then one should be willing to accept More's proof of the existence of God. Cf. preface, pp. B3v-B4. Both Glanvill and Wilkins tried to defuse the extreme scepticism involved in More's doubts about the reliability of our faculties.

of faith than that of Aristotle".⁶⁵ More cited this letter often, but he also pointed out, to his regret, that Descartes's hopes had not been fulfilled due to the strict materialism of his physics. This separated true metaphysics and the new science. More sought to reunite them in his *Conjectura Cabbalistica* of 1653, which is dedicated to Cudworth.⁶⁶ This work is a commentary on Genesis 1-3, examined on three levels, the literal, the philosophical, and the moral. When he moved from the literal to the philosophical level, More claimed that one could find the basic doctrines of Christianity (such as that of the Trinity) and the basic views of metaphysics and the new science (such as the preexistence of souls and the movement of the earth) in the Mosaic account. Thus, the philosophical Cabbala "justified those more noble results of free Reason and Philosophy from the vulgar suspicion of Impiety and Irreligion" and constituted an apology for the new science".⁶⁷

In the section entitled "Defence of the Threefold Cabala", More interpreted Moses as primarily a politician or law-giver. Seen from this perspective, Moses presented the story of the creation of the world as a means of gaining the Israelites's acceptance of the laws and ordinances he was giving them. Moses portrayed this as a most beneficial way employed by Moses to gain the acceptance of these excellent laws by the Israelites.⁶⁸

More wrote his friend, Lady Anne Conway, about this portion of his book and said: "I am very sensible how much this story of the

⁶⁵ The letter was apparently written in 1646 to William Boswell. See C. Adam and P. Tannery, *Oeuvres de Descartes*, Vol. IV, pp. 694-701. On More's changing views about Descartes, see Alan Gabbey, "Philosophia Cartesiana triumphata: Henry More 1646-1671", in *Problems of Cartesianism*, eds. T. Lennon, J. Nicholas and J. Davis (Montreal, 1982). More criticized Descartes in "the preface general" to *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* for distorting "the true and natural idea of motion" when he heard about Galileo's "ill hap". Galileo's imprisonment "frightened Des-Cartes into such a distorted description of Motion, that no mans Reason could make good sense of it". p. xi. More had recently seen Descartes' letters to Mersenne and realized how scared Descartes had been by Galileo's case.

⁶⁶ Henry More, *Conjectura Cabbalistica, Or, a Conjectural Essay of Interpreting the minde of Moses, according to the Threefold Cabbala: viz Literal, Philosophical and Mystical, or Divinely Moral* (London, 1653). The work is dedicated "to his eminently learned and truly religious friend, Dr. Cudworth".

⁶⁷ See Copenhaver, *op.cit.*, pp. 516ff, and the references given there. The quotation is on p. 518 n. 17. More's "The Preface general" to *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings* called his view "the most approvable Philosophical Interpretation of the three first Chapters of *Genesis* as ever was yet offered to the World since the loss of the ancient Judaicall Cabbala".

⁶⁸ More, *Conjectura Cabbalistica*, "Defense of the Threefold Cabbala", pp. 94-98.

Creation, by being insisted upon in the most literal sense, has further'd Atheisme in the world, and made profane men secure that the whole businesse of Religion is not better than an obvious fable".⁶⁹ The story taken literally would seem to conflict with modern science. More's "philosophicall" reading, however, found the principles of modern science in the Mosaic account. His "moral" presented the Mosaic account as a beneficent political way to get people to accept good laws. On that level, the account might be seen as a fable, used to provide authority for the Ten Commandments and the 613 Mosaic laws. (More did not realize that in putting it in this way he was providing the basis for the less benign Deist interpretation, and the atheistical one that was set forth in *The Three Imposters: Moses, Jesus and Mohammed*).⁷⁰

Later on, in the 1670s, More came to know the more recent cabbalistic writings of Isaac Luria and his disciples at Safed in the Holy Land. The European editor of these works, Knorr von Rosenroth, sent More parcels of these manuscripts. More, Cudworth, and Anne Conway, plus an unidentified rabbi, examined them. More felt there was "pretious gold in this Cabbalisticall rubbish" which might explain some of the Divine Mysteries and might bring the Jews and Christians together. The Jews would see that the basic Christian doctrines already appeared in the Cabbala.⁷¹ In this new cabbalistic material More found a basis for his theory that spirit is extended and that God in some sense has a body. Space is the sensorium of God.

More also found grounds for his interpretations of the prophecies in *Daniel* and *Revelation* in this new material. His close friend, Isaac Newton, adopted some of his cabbalistic metaphysics and some of his scriptural interpretations. They collaborated for years working out the meaning of various biblical prophecies.⁷² More gave a charming account of this in a letter written in 1680: "I remember you ... asked me about Mr. Newton and my agreement in Apocalypticall Notions. And I remember I told you ... how well we were agreed. For after his reading of the Exposition of the Apocalypse which I gave him, he

⁶⁹ Henry More's letter to Lady Anne Conway, July 4, 1653, in M. Nicolson, *The Conway Letters*, p. 82. See also More's letter to Lady Conway of March 28, 1653, *ibid.*, pp. 74-75.

⁷⁰ The interpretations of Moses's role as that of a politician, using a fable to convince the Israelites, plays an important role in *Les Trois Imposteurs*. The political interpretation of the role of Moses, Jesus and Mohammed was apparently formulated in the 1650s and was discussed by Oldenburg, Boreel and Spinoza and others.

⁷¹ Cf. Copenhaver, *op.cit.*, pp. 522-523.

⁷² *Ibid.*, pp. 540-547; and Hutin, *Henry More*, pp. 185-193.

came to my chamber, where he seem'd to me not onely to approve my Exposition as coherent and perspicuous throughout from the beginning to the end, but (by the manner of his countenance which is ordinarily melancholy and thoughtful, but then mighty lightsome and cheerfull, and by the free profession of what satisfaction he took therein) to be in a maner transported".⁷³

Nonetheless, More said that Newton would not abandon his own "conceits" about the seven Vials and the seven Trumpets and other symbols described in *Revelation*. More continued: "Mr. Newton has a singular genius to Mathematicks, and I take him to be a good serious man. But he pronounces of the Seven Churches [another symbol], not having yet read my Exposition of them ... And I do not doubt but when he shall have read my threefold Appendage to my Prophecys of Daniel...he will be of the same minde with myself". More added in a postscript to his correspondent that he hoped he would see, when More's exposition of *Daniel* came out, that Newton "was over sudden in his conceits" (p. 479).

More's letter was written soon after Newton had discovered the principle of universal gravitation, but several years before he published it. Newton was 38 at the time and not suffering from premature senility. He was at the height of his creative genius and was vitally concerned about the Millennial interpretation of biblical prophecies and with understanding the natural world. He read widely in ecclesiastical history and biblical commentaries, and wrote his own significant works on biblical history and the understanding of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. Newton was part of the third force insofar as he accepted part of More's metaphysics and searched for some kind of certitude in the interpretation of biblical prophecies.

The claim has been made that his greatest scientific achievement, the principle of universal gravitation, is taken from specific passages in Boehme's mystical writings.⁷⁴ Until all of the religious papers of Newton, scattered over the globe, are examined, one cannot evaluate this claim nor determine the extent to which Newton belonged

⁷³ Henry More to Dr. John Sharp, August 16, 1680, in Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, pp. 478-479.

⁷⁴ The original claim was made by Boehme's eighteenth-century English translator and editor, William Law. The supposed evidence is discussed in Stephen Hobhouse, *Selected Mystical Writings of William Law* (New York and London, 1948), Appendix Four, "Isaac Newton and Jacob Boehme. An Enquiry", pp. 397-422. Hobhouse is quite sceptical on this matter. B. J. Dobbs, who has examined many of Newton's alchemic papers, has told me she thinks Newton may well have been influenced by Boehme, but the papers described by Law do not seem to exist.

to the third force.⁷⁵ However, he was involved at least to the extent that he shared More's ideas and interests. The Newton manuscript that Frank Manuel published from the collection of Newton papers in the National Library of Israel shows clearly that Newton was trying to find some basis for certitude in interpreting prophecies in *Revelation*.⁷⁶ There are other large manuscripts of Newton's on the same theme, as well as the posthumously published *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John*.

To conclude this story, I want to deal briefly with the contribution of More's good friend, Lady Anne Conway (1631-79), to this movement. She was possibly the sharpest metaphysician in England during this period. Her brother had been a student of More's at Cambridge, and she studied privately with him. Her home, Ragley Hall, became a center for intellectual discussions amongst the Cambridge Platonists, plus the sceptical Joseph Glanvill, and the mystic Franciscus Mercurius van Helmont, who was her doctor. She suffered from a painful illness all her life. She and van Helmont explored Boehme's mysticism and that of the Quakers, against More's advice. Finally, she and the doctor joined the Quakers and participated in writing a work on Quaker theory. After Anne Conway died, Van Helmont took her philosophical manuscript abroad and published it in Latin and English in Holland. Until recently the work was thought to be by Van Helmont and was ignored with all his other cabbalistic and pseudo-scientific writings.⁷⁷

Her masterpiece is fittingly entitled *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, Concerning God, Christ and the Creatures, viz. of spirit and matter in general, whereby may be resolved all those problems or difficulties which neither by school nor common modern philosophy nor by the Cartesian, Hobbesian or Spinozian could be discussed*. Brilliantly she showed that the materialist theories of Descartes, Hobbes, and Spinoza could not account for activity or productive causality. She then went beyond the views of

⁷⁵ Professor B. J. Dobbs, Richard S. Westfall and I are organizing the publication of Newton's religious and alchemical papers. The Van Leer Foundation has encouraged us and launched us on this venture. We expect [or hope] by the end of this century to have published all of the Newton manuscripts spread from Jerusalem to the west coast of America.

⁷⁶ Isaac Newton, "Fragment from a Treatise on Revelation", in Frank Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford, 1974), pp. 107-125.

⁷⁷ On Anne Conway, see Marjorie Nicolson's account throughout the *Conway Letters*, and the more recent presentation in Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (New York, 1979), pp. 253-268.

the Cambridge Platonists and set forth a thoroughgoing monistic vitalism in which spirit and body are the same substance. Body is condensed spirit, and spirit subtle volatile body. But both are the same substance that is alive and active. Hobbes and Spinoza were wrong because they refused to recognize that the entire creation was alive and that there is a radical distinction between the creation and the Creator.

In Anne Conway's monistic vitalism, everything is directed by an infinitely perfect Deity, who is also all Spirit.⁷⁸ Then there is a graded level of spirits or bodies, joined together by middle spirits. In this theory Jesus Christ was seen as the intermediary uniting man's soul to God. Her theory amounts to a complete immaterialism, that may have influenced George Berkeley in the next generation, as he developed his strange philosophy.

Her most important influence was on the thought of Leibniz. Van Helmont gave Leibniz a copy of her book. He said afterwards that he had based his metaphysical system on hers (and he apparently took over the term 'monad' from her). In a letter to Burnet explaining how his views differed from Locke's, Leibniz said: "Mine in philosophy approach much more those of the late Lady Conway".⁷⁹ In Leibniz's system, he accepted mechanical explanations while asserting a complete vitalism. All monads are alive and perceptive, acting according to final causes.⁸⁰

The philosophy of the third-force group reached its climax in the seventeenth century in the metaphysical views of More and other Cambridge Platonists, and those of Lady Anne Conway. They offered a metaphysical basis for the new science in spiritualistic and vitalistic terms, and they insisted upon the importance of the imminent fulfillment of biblical prophecies.⁸¹ More and Cudworth each

⁷⁸ Anne Conway, *The Principles of the Most Ancient and Modern Philosophy, Concerning God and Christ and the Creatures, viz. of Spirit and Matter in general* (London, 1692), Chap. IX. A new edition of this work has been published with both the Latin and English texts, edited by Peter Lopston (The Hague, 1982). See also Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, pp. 453-454; and Merchant, *op.cit.*, pp. 258-264.

⁷⁹ See Leibniz's letter to Thomas Burnet, cited in Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, p. 456.

⁸⁰ On Leibniz's debt to Lady Conway, see Nicolson, *Conway Letters*, pp. 454-456; Merchant, *op.cit.*, pp. 264-68; and Lopston edition, references to Leibniz.

⁸¹ An interesting indication of this appears in the extreme Millenarian work of the French Protestant leader, Pierre Jurieu, *The Accomplishment of the Scripture Prophecies, or the Approaching Deliverance of the Church* (London, 1687). In the "Advice to all Christians, concerning the approaching End of the Antichristian Empire of the Papacy, and of the coming of the Kingdom of Christ", Jurieu claimed that the revival of the sciences, of knowledge of Greek and Hebrew, and the rise

strove to help bring about the conversion of the Jews. More tried to show the Jews that on the basis of the Cabbala they should accept Christianity. Cudworth had been on Cromwell's commission to decide whether to readmit the Jews into England, and he had been a strong supporter of readmission. He had visited Menasseh ben Israel in London and tried to find out why the great rabbi had not become a Christian. He wrote some works (not published) in answer to Jewish anti-Christian material Menasseh had given him, and he sought to interpret *Daniel* and *Revelation* in order to show that the Jews would finally convert.⁸² More and Newton sought to discover when the Millennium would commence. More, Cudworth, Lady Conway, and others also developed metaphysical theories that showed how their religious and scientific views could be part of one rational system—how acceptance of the new science and a belief in scriptural prophecies could be reconciled in a spiritual conception of the world.

The third force thinkers began, as did other modern philosophers, with the problem of overcoming scepticism. When Descartes and Dury met in the winter of 1634-35, they were offering each other two possible solutions to the sceptical crisis—reliance on mathematics or on the infallible interpretations of biblical prophecies. The overwhelming assurance of Millenarians from Mede to Newton was just as unshakeable as Descartes's conviction of the truth of clear and distinct ideas. When readers of Scripture opened their minds and hearts to God, in the manner of Jacob Boehme, they received infallible inspiration, which each of them could presumably distinguish from enthusiasm. Because of their convictions about what the immediate future course of history would be, they were active in encouraging the increase of knowledge to achieve universal knowledge,

of the new philosophy "doth help very much to scatter that darkness which the *Philosophy* of the *Schools* had cast upon the Doctrines of religion", p. 6v. Jurieu saw the modern developments in science and navigation as part of the path to the Millennium. And he found the interpretation of what was happening best expressed by Dr. More in his commentary on the Apocalypse, which he said followed Mede's views in most things. Jurieu's great opponent, Pierre Bayle, mercilessly ridiculed various third-force characters like Comenius, Dury and Serrarius.

⁸² Cudworth's relations with Menasseh ben Israel are described in Richard Kidder, *A Demonstration of the Messiah. In which the Truth of the Christian Religion is proved especially against the Jews*, 3 vols. (London, 1684-1700), Vol. II, pp. A4-A4v, and Vol. III, pp. iii-iv. In the preface to the 1743 edition of Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, a letter of Cudworth's to Thurloe in 1658 described his reaction to the manuscripts he received from Menasseh, p. x. On p. xx, two unpublished writings of Cudworth are listed, one on the Seventy Weeks in *Daniel*, and the other "Of the Verity of the Christian Religion against the Jews". The first is in the British Library, Addit. Mss. 4978-4987, while the other has not been located.

in trying to reunite the evangelical churches, and in preparing for the conversion of the Jews. Their drive to increase knowledge played a very important role in the development of modern science.

In a history of the future of Europe that Comenius wrote, he foresaw that great intellectual developments would occur as the commencement of the Millennium approached.⁸³ It was the firm conviction in the glorious future ahead that led these third-force thinkers to play a most influential role in seventeenth-century thought. From Mede to Newton and Leibniz (who exhibited strong Millenarian leanings in his Egyptian proposals and other writings), they were in the forefront of modern thought. Most of these thinkers conquered scepticism by appealing to their infallible interpretations of Scripture prophecies. These prophecies made them see the emergence of modern science as a crucial prelude to the Millennium. Some developed a spiritualistic metaphysics that joined their religious convictions and the new scientific picture of the world.

The amazing combination of Millenarian, mystical, rationalist, and scientific views, based on a firm conviction that a New Heaven and New Earth would soon appear, was found implausible by many eighteenth-century thinkers, as the deists and materialists turned reason and science against religion. We who have been raised in the Enlightenment tradition have seen 'the making of the modern mind' in terms of what led to the Age of Reason—namely scientific empiricism and rationalism turned against the Judeo-Christian tradition. A framework has been constructed in which Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, and Locke fit, and the rest of their contemporaries do not. For better or worse, we have to take the third-force thinkers seriously if we wish to comprehend the transformation that led to Newton's view of the world. If we can come to appreciate this mixture of religious and scientific thought, which seems so strange today, as a vital historical force three centuries back, we can then look at its continuations in the eighteenth century and onwards in the scientific Millennialism of Whiston, Hartley and Priestley, and in the romantic mystical Millennialism of Swedenborg, Blake, Wordsworth and Coleridge. When we can appreciate this important aspect of our intellectual heritage, we may be better able to understand where we now are and how we got here.

⁸³ J. A. Comenius, *A General Table of Europe, Representing the Present and Future State thereof* (s.l., 1670).

VII

SPINOZA'S RELATIONS WITH THE QUAKERS IN AMSTERDAM*

A Hebrew translation of a pamphlet by the English Quaker leader, Margaret Fell, was published in Holland in May 1658 and distributed to the Jews there. For reasons that will be discussed shortly, the translator of this pamphlet, and of at least one more that has not yet been located, was most probably the then recently excommunicated Jew, Baruch de Spinoza. If this is the case, then this text would be the earliest known publication of Spinoza, as well as the only known publication of his in Hebrew.

Why should anyone attribute the translation of this pamphlet for the conversion of the Jews to young Spinoza? The earliest fact that we know about Spinoza after his ejection from the Jewish community is that he met the leader of the Quaker mission in Amsterdam, William Ames, early in 1657 and had a talk with him. Quaker historians since Helen Crosfield in 1913 have referred to this meeting. In 1938 Henry Cadbury and William Hull published the text of Ames's letter to Margaret Fell, "the mother of the Quakers" and later wife of George

* I should like to thank the following persons for their helpful discussions, advice, criticisms, etc. In thanking them I am not suggesting that they would all agree with any of my conclusions about my findings: Prof. Yosef Kaplan, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Prof. David S. Katz, Tel Aviv University, Prof. Yermiyahu Yovel, Hebrew University, Jerusalem, Dr. A. Offenbergh, Biblioteek Rosenthaliana, University of Amsterdam, Prof. Jan van den Berg, and Dr. Ernestine van der Wall, University of Leiden, Prof. Lewis Feuer, University of Virginia, Prof. Amos Funkenstein, University of California, Los Angeles, and Mr. Michael Fried, University of California, Los Angeles. I am also extremely grateful for the kind assistance of the librarians of the Friends Library of London, of the William Andrews Clark Library of Los Angeles, the Henry Huntington Library of Pasadena, and the Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D. C. And lastly, I must express my gratitude to my wife, her constantly questioning my conclusions and forcing me to produce the very best evidence.

Fox, in which he described the event.¹ The letter sent from Utrecht on April 17, 1657, states:

There is a Jew at amsterdam that by the Jews is Cast out (as he himself and others sayeth) because he owneth no other teacher but the light and he sent for me and I spoke toe him and he was pretty tender and doth owne all that is spoken; and he sayde tow read of moyses and the prophets without was nothing tow him except he came toe know it within: and soe the name of Christ it is like he doth owne: I gave order that one of the duch Copyes of thy book should be given toe him and he sent me word he would Come toe oure meeting but in the mean time I was Imprisoned.²

Quaker historians have been fairly sure that the person being described by Ames was Spinoza. Leon Roth, Lewis Feuer and the Dutch historian of religion, Jan van den Berg, have all been sure it was Spinoza.³ Evidence concerning the excommunications from the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue makes it apparent that Spinoza is the only person expelled for ideological reasons who could have met Ames at that time. From other information I have uncovered in the archives of the Friends Library in London, Spinoza is most likely the Jew described, who after the Ames meeting, became the Hebrew translator for the Quakers.

As the result of the researches of the late Israel Révah, we know that at the time of Spinoza's excommunication in July 1656 four people had been accused or excommunicated from the Amsterdam Synagogue for their views. Uriel da Costa was the first. He committed

¹ Cf. Helen Crosfield, *Margaret Fox, of Swarthmoor Hall* (London, 1913), p. 50n; Henry J. Cadbury, "Hebraica and the Jews in Early Quaker Interest", in Howard H. Brinton, editor, *Children of Light* (New York, 1938), p. 160; and William I. Hull, *The Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam* (Philadelphia, 1938), Swarthmore College Monographs on Quaker History, No. 4, p. 205.

² The original text is in *Letters and Documents of Early Friends, copied from originals which were preserved at Swarthmore Hall*, Vol. I, p. 73, in the manuscript collection at the Friends Library in London. It is reprinted in the Cadbury and Hull works cited above.

³ See Henry J. Cadbury, "The Swarthmore Documents in America", Supplement No. 20, *Journal of the Friends' Historical Society* (1940), p. 7, and "Spinoza and a Quaker Document of 1657", *Medieval and Renaissance Studies*, The Warburg Institute (1943), p. 132; Hull, *op.cit.*, p. 205; and Isabel Ross, Margaret Fell, *Mother of Quakerism* (London, 1949), p. 3.

See also Leon Roth, "Hebraists and Non-Hebraists of the Seventeenth Century", *Journal of Semitic Studies* VI (1961), p. 211, "Mr. Cadbury's identification of the Jew who was 'cast out' with Spinoza is as I imagine beyond doubt"; Lewis Feuer, *Spinoza and the Rise of Liberalism*, (Boston, 1958), p. 49, it "doubtless was Spinoza"; Jan van den Berg, "Quaker and Chiliast: the contrary thoughts of William Ames and Peter Serrarius", in R. Buick Knox, editor, *Reformation, Conformity and Dissent: Essays in honour of Geoffroy Nuthall* (London, 1977), pp. 182-83, said it definitely was Spinoza.

suicide in 1640 or 1647 and so cannot have been the person who met Ames.⁴ Three others, Spinoza, Juan de Prado and Daniel Ribera, were part of one group. Prado, a Spaniard, twenty years older than Spinoza, was probably the leader. He came to Amsterdam in 1655, and was soon in trouble for expressing deistical views he had developed in Spain. At the time of Spinoza's excommunication, Prado, in order to save himself, made an official apology. He was excommunicated on February 14, 1657 for still holding "detestable opinions against our Holy Law", and for seducing people into his beliefs. He appealed and got his relatives to intervene. The case was still going on in late May 1657. The later official excommunication document is dated February 4, 1658. Therefore, he had not been excommunicated by the Jews at the time of the Ames meeting, but he was attempting reconciliation with the Synagogue and was not looking for non-Jewish support.⁵

Daniel Ribeira was accused of teaching views like Prado's in a religious school. He was still being paid as of February 14, 1657 by the Jewish community, and he was making financial contributions to the community up to September 1657. He was not actually excommunicated, since he left Amsterdam before the conclusion of his case. He could not therefore have been the Jew who "by the Jews is cast out", as he had not been expelled by the time of the Ames meeting, and he was not later in Amsterdam.⁶

Many other excommunications occurred for such laxities as non-payment of dues or failure to honor marriage contracts. These cases are not relevant here since they were not based on ideological matters and ended with a reconciliation of the parties.⁷

By a process of elimination, I think we can be fairly certain that Spinoza was the only Jew who could have met Ames. If so, it is interesting for the interpretation of Spinoza's later development that

⁴ On Uriel da Costa, see the article on him in the *Encyclopedia Judaica* by R. H. Popkin, "Costa, Uriel da", Vol. V, pp. 987-88.

⁵ For all of the details about Juan de Prado and his case, see I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et Juan de Prado* (The Hague, 1959), which also contains the official documents.

⁶ For the details and documents of Ribera's case, see I. S. Révah, "Aux Origines de la rupture spinozienne: Nouveaux documents sur l'incroyance dans la communauté Judeo-Portugaise d'Amsterdam à l'époque de l'excommunication de Spinoza", *Revue des Études Juives*, 4 Série, Tome III (CXXIII) (1964), pp. 359-431.

⁷ Prof. Yosef Kaplan of Hebrew University presented a paper on the other known excommunications from the Amsterdam Synagogue in the seventeenth century, at the 350th Anniversary Commemoration of the Birth of Spinoza in Amsterdam, November 1982. This paper will appear soon in the proceedings of the conference to be published by the Spinoza Society and the Dutch Royal Academy of Sciences.

it was he who sought out Ames, apparently to learn more about Quaker views. Van den Berg says that the Amsterdam Millenarian leader, Peter Serrarius (1600-1669), who had befriended the Quakers, was the man who introduced Spinoza to Ames.⁸ Until his death in 1669 Serrarius played an as yet unexplained role in Spinoza's life, serving as the link between Spinoza and his English correspondents, Henry Oldenburg and Robert Boyle, taking messages, letters and books from Holland to England, and from England to Holland.⁹ The views Spinoza expressed to Ames were very similar to those of the Collegiants with whom he was living at the time, as well as to Serrarius, and to those of the early Quakers. The stress is on inner light and conviction, with no mention of creeds or churches.

Ames tells us that after the meeting Spinoza sent word that he would come to a Quaker meeting. Ames was imprisoned before this happened, and was then exiled from Amsterdam, so he consequently had no further contact with the "Jew at amsterdam that by the Jews is cast out" until much later when he returned.

Further information indicating that Spinoza became the Hebrew translator for the Quakers comes from other members of the Quaker mission. This mission had been started in 1656 for the purpose of preparing for the conversion of the Jews. The Quakers, like other Millenarians of the time, were convinced this great event in Christian eschatology would occur in 1656.¹⁰ In England in 1655 and 1656

⁸ Cf. Van den Berg, *op.cit.*, p. 183.

⁹ I have discussed the relationship of Spinoza and Serrarius in three papers, "Spinoza, the Quakers and the Millenarians, 1656-1658", *Manuscrito* 6 (1982), pp. 113-133; "Spinoza and the Millenarians", *Zmanim, History Quarterly of Tel Aviv University* (in Hebrew), 1984, pp. 54-64; and "Spinoza and the Conversion of the Jews", 300th Anniversary Commemoration of the Birth of Spinoza, Amsterdam, November 1982, Proceedings, published as C. de Deugd, ed., *Spinoza's Political and Theological Thought* (Amsterdam, 1984), pp. 171-183. When the correct facts about Serrarius's life are known, and when his role in the Oldenburg correspondence is examined, it is clear that he was much involved with Spinoza, and was probably his patron after the excommunication. Dr. Ernestine van der Wall of Leiden has written a full-length study of Serrarius. He was apparently the leader of a Dutch Christian group of followers of Sabbatai Zevi.

¹⁰ After all, it was 1656 years from the Creation of the world until the Flood, so something equally monumental should occur 1656 years after the birth of Jesus. All sorts of signs pointed to the conversion of the Jews as the expected event. See, for instance, Christopher Hill, *Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), pp. 114-15; Peter Toon, ed., *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge, 1970), and Christopher Hill, "Till the Conversion of the Jews", William Andrews Clark Lecture, October 1982, forthcoming; and David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982), chapters 3 and 4.

many Quaker pamphlets were issued in English addressed to the Jews, urging them to reform, see the Light and be converted. There were seven or eight known Jews in England at the time and one or two converts. It was realized by the Quaker leaders that the real intended audience was nearby in Holland; hence the establishment of the Dutch mission.¹¹

Margaret Fell, who was directing the movement after the imprisonment of George Fox, had written a pamphlet, an open letter to the famous Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam, while he was in London negotiating the possible re-admission of the Jews into England. Her pamphlet, published in February 1656, was entitled *For Manasseh-ben Israel the Call of the Jews out of Babylon, Which is Good Tidings to the Meek, Liberty to the Captives, and of the Opening of the Prison Doors*. She assumed that Menasseh would bring all of his brethren into England. Then God would fulfill His promises, including the conversions of the Jews. Near the end of the pamphlet, Margaret Fell had said, "I charge thee Manasseh ben Israel, that thou wilt answer it before the living God, that thou let this be read and published among thy Brethren, and to goe abroad among them where they are scattered".¹² There is no evidence that Menasseh ever saw this work, or if he did, that he paid any attention to it.¹³ However, Margaret Fell wanted the work translated into Hebrew and asked Samuel Fisher to translate it into Hebrew and to translate another work of hers into Latin or Greek.¹⁴

Samuel Fisher, who will become of great significance in our story, was the only one of the early Quakers who was a university man. He studied at Oxford and learned Hebrew and Greek. He became a Baptist minister and then was converted to Quakerism in 1654 by John Stubbs. Fisher quickly became involved in dramatic episodes

¹¹ On the Quaker concern to convert the Jews and on the establishment of the Quaker mission in Holland, see Hull, *The Rise of Quakerism in Amsterdam*. On the state of the few Jews in England at the time, see Katz, *op.cit.*, chapters 1, 5 and 6.

¹² Margaret Fell (Fox), *For Manasseh Ben Israel. The Call of the Jews out of Babylon* (London, 1656) p. 20.

¹³ Cecil Roth, in his *A Life of Menasseh ben Israel* (Philadelphia, 1934), suggested that maybe one day, while Menasseh was in London, the "unfortunate rabbi was overwhelmed . . . with a large parcel of copies damp from the printer", p. 255. But there is nothing actually to indicate that even one copy was delivered to him personally.

¹⁴ Ross, *Margaret Fell*, p. 91. *Spence Mss.* Friends Library, London: Margaret Fell to Samuel Fisher, March 1656, fol. 27; Margaret Fell to John Stubbs, 1656, fol. 28; and Margaret Fell to William Caton, May 10, 1657, fol. 31.

as he tried to witness his faith in Parliament and other restricted public places. He also became the chief Quaker arguer against learned Protestant theologians.¹⁵

Fisher was unable to do Margaret Fell's translation and get it printed in London before setting off with Stubbs on a great mission to try to convert the Pope in Rome and the Sultan in Constantinople. En route he and Stubbs decided to go to Amsterdam and attempt to convert the Jews there. Margaret Fell had asked Stubbs to take some of her work to Holland, in Hebrew if possible, or to have it translated into Hebrew when he got there. One of the works she described is the one that was actually published in Hebrew in 1658.¹⁶

A young Quaker, William Caton, had made several trips to Holland, from 1655 onward, trying to get a Quaker group established. He knew little or no Dutch or Hebrew. He described going to the Amsterdam Synagogue and going with Fisher afterwards to the homes of some of the Jews and arguing with them.¹⁷

The mission activities were in a state of disruption in 1657 partly due to the arrest and exile of their leader, William Ames, who knew Dutch quite well, and due to an internal crisis in the Quaker movement caused by the Messianic pretensions of the Quaker, James Nayler, who in October 1656 had proclaimed that he was Jesus Christ. He was arrested, tried by Parliament, severely punished and imprisoned. Nonetheless he had ardent followers throughout the Quaker world. One of his most devoted followers, Ann Cargill, went to Holland breaking up one Quaker meeting after another for several years.¹⁸

¹⁵ On Fisher's career, see the article on him in the *Dictionary of National Biography*; and William Braithwaite, *The Beginnings of Quakerism*, 2nd ed., revised by H. J. Cadbury (Cambridge, 1955), esp. pp. 288-294 and 426-428. Fisher died in 1665, the year before Robert Barclay, also a university man, became a Quaker.

¹⁶ See Ross, *op. cit.*, p. 91. *Letters and Documents of the Early Friends*, Vol. III, letters of John Stubbs to Margaret Fell, London, 10th day, 6th month, 1657, fol. 463. On fol. 470 Stubbs reported to Margaret Fell that he gave Fisher her books and Fisher was going to translate them, but not in England. The voyage of Fisher and Stubbs to Rome and Constantinople is described in Braithwaite, *op. cit.*, pp. 426-428.

¹⁷ See William Caton, *A Journal of the Life of that Faithful Servant and Minister of Jesus Christ Will Caton* (London, 1689), pp. 20-40. On p. 40 Caton describes a visit to the Amsterdam Synagogue on a Sabbath, and reports that the Jews would not permit dispute during the service, "but after their Worship was ended, I and another friend had some pretty good Service with some of them in their Houses; but they are a very hard, obstinate and conceited People in their way".

¹⁸ On James Nayler, see Mabel R. Brailsford, *A Quaker from Cromwell's Army, James Nayler* (London, 1927); Emilia Fogelklou, *James Nayler, the Rebel Saint* (London, 1931); Ross, *op. cit.*, chap. VIII, "Margaret Fell and James Nayler 1652-

The reports by the missionaries to Margaret Fell, especially those of young William Caton, indicate that constant disruptions were taking place due to the Naylerites.¹⁹ Caton was trying desperately to keep the mission together while Fisher dealt with the Jews. The response to Caton's frantic letters always included requests for progress reports on the publication of Margaret Fell's work in Holland. Ames had translated the letter to Menasseh ben Israel into Dutch before his imprisonment, and Caton described getting it published and distributed at the Synagogue. He gave some copies to the Jews, "at their Synagogue, some to the Rabbyes, and some to the Doctors, and I cannot understand that they have anything against it, but only they apprehend that the Author doth judge that the Mesias is come already and they looke for him yet".²⁰ It is this Dutch translation of Margaret Fell's letter to Menasseh ben Israel that Ames gave to Spinoza after they met.

Margaret Fell then began pressing Caton about second conversionist tract of hers, entitled *A Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham Among the Jews, Where Ever They are Scattered Up and Down Upon the Face of the Earth...Wandering Up and Down from Mountain to Hill. Seeking Rest but Finding None*, published in 1657. She wanted to know if it would appear soon in Dutch and Hebrew.²¹ Caton answered on November 18, 1657 that he had "bene with A Jew and have showed him thy booke, I have asked him what language would be the fittest for them he told me portugees or Hebrew: for if it were in Hebrew they might understand it at Jerusalem or in almost any other place of the world. And he hath undertaken to translate it for us, he being expert in several languages".²²

1660", pp. 98-114; and Christopher Hill, *The World Turned Upside Down* (London, 1972), chap. 10, pp. 186-207.

¹⁹ See Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 230-272. Ann Cargill's disruptive activities are mentioned many times in the Quaker reports. See, for instance, *A. R. Barclay Mss.*, Friends Library, London, fol. 156; *Letters and Documents of Early Friends*, Vol. I, fol. 71, fol. 371; *Caton Mss.*, fol. 34 and fol. 507.

²⁰ The Dutch translation is entitled *Aen Manasse ben Israel. Den Roep der Joden uyt Babyloniaen, overgeset uyt Engelsche in de Nederlandtsche Tales door William Ames* (s.l., 1657). On the distribution of this work to the Amsterdam Jews, see Caton's letter to Margaret Fell, June 26, 1657, *Caton Mss.* fol. 38.

²¹ Margaret Fell to William Caton, *Spence Mss.*, May 10, 1657, fol. 31.

²² William Caton to Margaret Fell, November 18, 1657, *Caton Mss.* fol. 38bis. At this time Jerusalem did not have much of a Jewish community. The reference to Jerusalem may reflect the visit of Rabbi Nathan Shapira from there. Rabbi Shapira was in Amsterdam in the spring of 1657 and created a great stir among the Dutch and English Millenarians. On this see R. H. Popkin, "Rabbi Nathan Shapira's visit

On March 15, 1658, in the midst of the turmoil in the Quaker community in Holland, which was also now coming under attack from Millenarian leaders like Peter Serrarius and Adam Boreel,²³ the chief of the Collegiants, Caton gave a progress report to Margaret Fell. This letter contains much important data for our purposes, as well as a moving picture of the fortunes of the Quaker mission. Caton said, "As touching thy booke (titulated A Loving Salutation), I have gotten it once translated in Dutch; because the Jew that is to translate it into Hebrew, could not translate it out of English; He hath it now, and is translating of it; like he hath done the other, which Samuell Fisher and John Stubbs have taken along with them: the Jew that translates it, remaines very friendly in his way".²⁴

All of the material about the Amsterdam mission that I examined at the Friends Library in London indicates there was only one Jew who was involved with the Quaker mission at that time. Spinoza is the only one we know of who showed any interest. The accounts of interchanges with the members of the Synagogue, as we shall see, show that no one was enticed to come closer to the Quakers.²⁵

Since Ames and Caton were out of contact, there is nothing from Ames about the Jewish translator until late 1658, where he does mention that he is "one who hath been a Jew".²⁶ Caton only tells us about the translator's linguistic ability that he knew Dutch, Portuguese, Hebrew, and other languages not including English and that his attitude "remaines friendly in his way". Since Caton knew little Dutch or Latin, we do not know how much communication went on between them. It is obvious from Caton's progress report that the same Jew had translated both of Margaret Fell's pamphlets, the letter to Menasseh ben Israel, and *A Loving Salutation*. The first was taken away by Samuel Fisher and John Stubbs. They departed from Holland at this point for their all-important journey to convert the

to Amsterdam in 1657", in the *Proceedings of the Symposium on Dutch Jewish History, Dutch Jewish History*, Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, December 1982.

²³ See Hull, *op. cit.*, pp. 237-241 and 261-262; and Van den Berg, *op. cit.*, pp. 193-198.

²⁴ William Caton to Margaret Fell, March 15, 1658, *Caton Mss.* fol. 507.

²⁵ H. J. Cadbury concluded his essay "Hebraica and the Jews in Early Quaker Interest", saying, "There is, however, no evidence that Jews embraced Quakerism or were influenced by it or even mentioned it in their writings. The Jewish historians whom I have consulted agree with this verdict". p. 163.

²⁶ Ames wrote to George Fox, October 14, 1658, after receiving a request to get one of Fox's works addressed to the Jews translated into Hebrew and reported, "I have spoke with one who hath been a Jew toe translate it intoe Hebrew". *Barclay Mss.* fol. 19.

Pope and the Sultan. Some of Fisher's remarks in his massive work, published in 1660, *Rusticus ad Academicos: A Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies*, ("Rabbies" referring to teachers and professors in general), indicate that they stopped en route at several synagogues where Fisher deplored the idolatry of the Torah.²⁷ They may have used the Hebrew translation of Margaret Fell's letter to Menasseh as material to convince the Jews at these stops.

Caton's letter went on to describe the Jews' reaction to the efforts of Samuel Fisher, who could presumably communicate with them in Hebrew or Latin. "Sam. Fisher was in the Synagogue at Amsterdam and among them at Rotterdam; they were pretty moderate towards him: (I mean they did not abuse him) but assented to much of that which he spoke: he had some discourse with two or three of their Doctors in private at Amsterdam: and they seemed to owne in words the substance of that which he declared: but they were in bondage as people of other formes are".²⁸ Elsewhere Caton described how he, and probably Fisher, went to people's homes after services and argued for three or four hours.²⁹

Caton closed his report with news that Ann Cargill "that wicked woman that went out from the Truth" was causing all sorts of problems. And this eventually destroyed the Quaker mission.³⁰

Margaret Fell sent further instructions to Caton that we do not possess, which he answered in May 1658 from London. Just before leaving Amsterdam he had obtained the printed copies of the Hebrew translation from the printer. The same day he dispersed about 170 of them "among the Jews who willingly and greedily received them (they being in the Hebrew tongue)".³¹ He had intended to bring 100 copies back to England "but I disposed of some of these in Zeeland, their being several Jews".³²

After a search of more than a year, I located two copies of this pamphlet in the Friends Library in London.³³ There is also a Hebrew - English edition published in London in 1660. The pamphlet is actually described in Leon Roth's article, "Hebraists and Non-Hebraists of

²⁷ Fisher commented on this in his *A Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies* (1660), reprinted in *The Testimony of Truth Exalted* (s.l., 1679), p. 242.

²⁸ William Caton to Margaret Fell, March 1658, *Caton Mss.* fol. 507.

²⁹ Caton, *Journal*, p. 40. Quaker historians do not seem to have noted that Fisher was, for a time, a prominent member of the Amsterdam Quaker mission.

³⁰ William Caton to Margaret Fell, March 1658, *Caton Mss.* fol. 507.

³¹ William Caton to Margaret Fell, May 21, 1658, *Caton Mss.* fol. 40.

³² *Ibid.*

³³ These are *Tracts* 53, No. 22 and *Tracts* 133, No. 39.

the Seventeenth Century", as "a beautifully printed pamphlet of sixteen pages on excellent paper in the delightful Dutch cursive rabbinic type". Roth had inventoried the Hebrew documents in the Friends Archives. He made no effort to identify either the translator or the printer or the date or place of publication.³⁴ He said that the pamphlet "is clearly from a Jewish translator". and suggested that he might have been a rabbi, Samuel Levi Asshur from Poland, who got involved with the Quakers in London in 1660, and desperately needed money and employment.³⁵

However the Amsterdam 1658 and London 1660 Hebrew translations of Margaret Fell's pamphlet are exactly the same except for misprints in the 1660 edition. These may be due to the lack of good Hebrew printers in London at the time. The most that Rabbi Asshur could have done for the 1660 edition is to lay out the format of the English-Hebrew edition. A letter from John Stubbs to George Fox, probably from 1660, discussed this Hebrew-English edition which is probably the one that Caton described handing out to the Jews in Frankfurt, Germany, the next year.³⁶

The Hebrew translation of the pamphlet comes with twenty questions Margaret Fell had included to the rabbis to make them see the error of their ways. It also contains a two-page exhortation by Samuel Fisher urging the Jews to convert. The pamphlet, in English, and Hebrew is in Margaret Fell's early Quaker style, a running mixture of Bible quotations and exhortations. Fisher, apparently writing in Hebrew since no English original is known, is in his inimitable run-on rambling style, that encompassed all sorts of messages and digressions. The joining of the Hebrew translation to Fisher's exhortation suggests that the translator may have known Fisher, who was in Amsterdam for three to six months. This may be the most significant matter to issue from the Quaker mission, since Fisher, when he published his massive masterwork in 1660, developed what Christopher

³⁴ Roth, "Hebraists and Non-Hebraists of the Seventeenth Century", p. 210. A second printing of the same translation was made in London in 1660. A copy of this is at the Friends Library, London, *Tracts*, No. 38.

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ William Caton to Margaret Fell, "nere Worms 1661 30th of the 11th mo", *Letters and Documents of the Early Friends*, Vol. I, fol. 468. "Many of the Jewes have gotten of thy Hebrew bookes, when I was Among them at Frankfort, in their synagogue I heard of thine & of J. Pennington, which were in the German language, but thine in Hebrew they had more mind to them to the other". The letter of Stubbs to Fox is *Crossfield Mss.* fol. 7.

See H. J. Cadbury, "Hebraica and the Jews in Early Quaker Interest", p. 155 for all that seems to be known about Rabbi Asshur and the Quakers.

Hill has called the most radical Bible criticism of the seventeenth century.³⁷ In attacking the Protestant claim that Scripture is the Word of God Fisher presented a very great number of the same points that appeared ten years later in Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.³⁸ Fisher only published his sceptical onslaught against Biblical theologians in England in English in 1660. However, he could easily have told some of his arguments to Spinoza in 1657-58. Fisher did talk and argue with the Amsterdam Jews for hours on end, so they had some common language, maybe Latin or Hebrew. Thus he had the means for communicating with Spinoza as well.

Whether he did it or not, it is obvious that many of the same points appear in Fisher's work, and in chapters 7 through 12 of Spinoza's *Tractatus* often with the same examples about the history of the Scriptural texts, the loss of the originals, the transcription problems, the problem of Hebrew vowels, the human factors involved in present copies, etc. As Spinoza said, in much the same words as Samuel Fisher, "They that look upon the Bible, however it be, as a Letter sent from Heaven by God to Man, will certainly claim and say, I am guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in maintaining that the Word of God is faulty, maimed, adulterated and contradictory to itself: that we have but fragments of it, and that the Original Writing of the Covenant which God made with the Jews perished".³⁹ The paper and ink are not to be worshipped, and are not the Word of God.⁴⁰

The possible historical connection between Fisher and Spinoza seems to be accounted for in this Hebrew translation of Margaret Fell. Fisher and Spinoza were in Amsterdam at the same time and if Spinoza is the translator, they were working on the same project. Fisher apparently took the manuscript of Spinoza's first translation, Margaret Fell's letter to Menasseh ben Israel, with him when he left for Rome and Constantinople. And, for some presumably good reason his exhortation to the Jews was attached to Spinoza's second translation which substituted for the one Fisher never accomplished. Further details about the Quaker mission might give us more clues about the relationship of Spinoza and Fisher.

³⁷ Christopher Hill, *op.cit.*, pp. 208-215.

³⁸ In what follows I have summarized the argument that flows through Samuel Fisher's *The Rustick's Alarm to the Rabbies*.

³⁹ Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. xxii; first paragraph; Gebhardt edition, Vol. III, p. 158.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, chap. xii, p. 169, in Elwes translation (London, 1887); Gebhardt edition, pp. 160-161.

The final indication as to the Hebrew translator of the Amsterdam Quakers comes from a letter of William Ames to George Fox, dated October 14, 1658. Caton by then had left for England. Fox at this time wanted a work of his, probably his *A Visitation to the Jews* of 1656, translated and published in Hebrew. Ames was back from his banishment and spoke to the translator "who hath been a Jew toe translate it intoe Hebrew".⁴¹ Ames had first gotten Fox's work translated into Dutch "because he who is toe translate it into Hebrew cannot understand english".⁴² As a result of his experience in Holland, Ames had come to the conclusion that "the Common people of the Jewes cannot speak Hebrew but the greatest part can speak high Dutch and thearfore I with some others according to oure knowledge of the thing doe Judge it would be of farr more service in high Dutch then in Hebrew, because it then would not only be of service for the Jewes, but likewise toe others, and especially the latter part of it, which might also be printed in high Dutch for it is only the former part which I had order to get printed in hebrew, soe before it goes forward in hebrew I doe expect toe hear from thee, for if it be in hebrew they who can read it will not, and they who would cannot".⁴³ So the Hebrew translator was not set to work on George Fox's pamphlet and the Amsterdam mission stopped focussing on the conversion of the Jews in which effort they had apparently been completely unsuccessful.

If Spinoza was the person who met Ames, and wanted to participate in the Quakers' activities, and learn about their views, was he the ex-Jew who became their Hebrew translator? We lack documents from either Ames or Caton in which they comment on the ex-Jew they each know. Ames was in jail or in banishment when Caton was working with the Hebrew translator, and Caton was in England when Ames returned to Amsterdam and spoke with the translator who "hath been a Jew" on behalf of George Fox's desire to have a work of his translated into Hebrew. From the account, it appears that Ames was now less interested in dealing with the Jews or converting them and was more concerned about making Fox's views known to the general community. This may reflect the failure of the Amsterdam mission to get anywhere with the Jewish population of Holland.

The documents examined do not in any way suggest that there was more than one Jewish person involved with the Quakers at that time. Spinoza clearly seems to be the person described at the outset

⁴¹ William Ames to George Fox, Harlingen, Oct. 14, 1658, *Barclay Mss.*, fol. 19.

⁴² *Ibid.*

⁴³ *Ibid.*

by Ames. If the Quakers had gotten a second Jewish supporter, one would expect this to have been reported to Margaret Fell. It appears that the same person who did the translation of two of Margaret Fell's pamphlets into Hebrew was the one consulted about the possibility of translating George Fox's work. Spinoza possessed all the linguistic skills, positive and negative, that are mentioned. He could read Dutch, Portuguese and Hebrew, but he did not read English. It is doubtful that there were many if any other ex-Jews in Amsterdam with such linguistic abilities. The eastern European Jews would not have known Portuguese and do not seem to have mixed at all with Christians. Among the Iberian Jews, recently arrived Marranos probably would not have known Dutch or much Hebrew. There may have been drop-outs from Spinoza's generation about whom we do not yet know. From our present information, the hypothesis that Spinoza not only met the Quaker leader, William Ames, in early 1657 and that he also became the Hebrew translator for the Quaker mission seems plausible and is the only one that encompasses the known data. This hypothesis would also help account for the striking similarities in Spinoza's Biblical criticism to that of Samuel Fisher and for the recurrent use of Quaker terms and concepts in Spinoza's writings.

Spinoza, as he appears in the initial encounter with Ames in early 1657, had already developed an affinity for the overall Quaker view about the need to know Moses, the Prophets and Christ inwardly, through the light. And Spinoza wanted to know more of the Quaker view. What appears in Margaret Fell's pamphlets is in keeping with this concern for inward spiritual knowledge, and salvation through greater awareness that permeates Spinoza's views as later published.

In Spinoza's career, he wrote but did not publish the unfinished *Treatise on the Improvement of the Understanding* in 1661-62. At this point his Millenarian friend, Peter Balling, visited him in Rijnsburg, and took some materials of Spinoza's to Amsterdam.⁴⁴ Balling is supposed to be the author of the pamphlet, *The Light on the Candlestick*, published in Dutch in 1662, and probably in Latin by Adam Boreel, and in English by the Quaker, Benjamin Furly.⁴⁵ The English is an attempt to provide a rational basis for a spiritual view of

⁴⁴ Spinoza's relations with Peter Balling, one of the Collegiants, is discussed in Abraham Wolf, *The Correspondence of Spinoza* (New York, 1928), pp. 49, 104, 138-140.

⁴⁵ The original title page lists the work as by William Ames, Spinoza's Quaker friend, and translated by B. F., apparently the Quaker, Benjamin Furly. However, William Sewel, the first historian of the Quakers, says in his *The History of the Rise, Increase and Progress of the Christian People called Quakers* (2 vols., London, 1722), that Balling wrote the Dutch and Boreel the Latin, Preface, 6th page. The

truth, gained from within. It clearly reflects either Spinoza's influence or Spinoza's contribution and uses materials that appear in the unpublished *Improvement of the Understanding*.⁴⁶ Thus, Spinoza's views provided a basis for Quaker spirituality. Balling's pamphlet was considered important enough as a statement of the philosophical foundation of Quakerism that it has been reprinted over and over again in Willem Sewel's *History of the Quakers*.⁴⁷

On the other hand, one finds Spinoza often using Quaker terminology about spirit, light and inward knowledge. One striking example that seems to indicate Spinoza was really influenced by his Quaker contacts is the following passage from the *Tractatus*. "He who firmly believes that God, out of mercy and grace with which He directs all things, forgives the sins of men, and who feels his love of God kindled thereby, he, I say, does really know Christ according to the Spirit and Christ is in him".⁴⁸ In considering what God may be, in the explanation of this passage, Spinoza gave the possibilities, "God, or the Exemplar of the true life, may be whether fire or spirit or light, or thought, or what not . . ." ⁴⁹ The Quaker possibilities, spirit or light, appear as prominent possible explanations. Various phrases in Margaret Fell's pamphlet sound similar to Spinoza's phrases (possibly since they both use so much Biblical language). Once one realizes Spinoza knew something of the Quaker views of the time, then one can note many usages that may come from his contracts with actual Quakers, or from reading some of their writings.

Little attention has been given to the character of works written in Hebrew at this time by Christians. Fisher's exhortation is one case. This literature, if examined carefully, may give us some ideas about the language in which Jewish-Christian discourse was going on then. For the Christian Hebraists Hebrew studies represented not only a means of comprehending the Bible better, but also a way of entering into the Jewish intellectual world of the time, and of bringing the message of Christianity to the Jews. Efforts were being made to edit

text is given in the "Addenda", Vol. II, pp. 717-723, and appears in the subsequent editions of Sewel's work.

⁴⁶ A careful comparison of the texts needs to be made. Sentences such as "The Light is a clear and distinct Knowledge of Truth in the Understanding of every Man, by which he is so convinced of the Being and Quality of Things, that he cannot possibly doubt thereof" (*Light on the Candlestick*, p. 719), certainly suggest some connection with what Spinoza was writing at the same time.

⁴⁷ Sewel's *History* was reprinted in various languages for the next century and a half.

⁴⁸ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, chap. xiv, Elwes translation, p. 187.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

a good many traditional Hebrew and Aramaic texts, the Mishna and the Talmud, and many Medieval writers.⁵⁰ There was a good deal of discussion about translating the New Testament into Hebrew for the benefit of the Jewish audience though little was done about it until late in the eighteenth century. A translation of St. Thomas Aquinas into Hebrew was commenced.⁵¹ Some Millenarians, like Henry Jessey, spoke and wrote Hebrew in preparation for the Millennium, where they expected it to be the *lingua franca*.⁵² So there is a world of Christian Hebrew materials that needs exploration if we are to comprehend Jewish-Christian relations of the time.

Spinoza's translation and Fisher's exhortation may be significant in indicating the character and tone and effect, or lack of same, of the Christian Hebrew writings. It would also, of course, be our first glimpse at Spinoza's Hebrew and would provide some indication of his Hebrew philosophical and theological vocabulary. Also, if by any chance Spinoza was not the translator, it would provide some insight into the Hebrew of an as yet unknown Jewish scholar, who had been cast out, or dropped out of the Sephardic community of Amsterdam in Spinoza's day.

⁵⁰ Both Adam Boreel and Richard Simon were working on editions of these texts. Boreel apparently printed a Hebrew edition of the Mishna, but was unable to sell it.

⁵¹ Hebrew Union College has the volume that appeared. A summary of the history of the project is given in it.

⁵² [Edward Whiston], *The Life and Death of Mr. Henry Jessey*, (s.l., 1671), p. 62.

VIII

SPINOZA AND THE THREE IMPOSTERS

Much has been written about the fact that Spinozistic ideas were spread in the early 18th century through the underground work, *Les Trois Imposteurs, ou l'Esprit de M. Spinoza*, which was first printed in 1719.¹ There is a good deal of research going on presently in Europe and the United States on the origins and dissemination of this work, and its possible relation to Spinoza's circle.² What I wish to deal with today is where Spinoza himself fitted in the historical development of the work. I shall try to show that an early formulation of at least chapter 3 of *Les Trois Imposteurs*, "Ce que signifie le mot *religion*. Comment & pourquoi il s'en est introduit un si grand nombre dans le monde. Toutes les religions sont l'ouvrage de la politique . . .", existed in some form by 1656. This formulation was known to Henry Oldenburg, later Spinoza's friend and correspondent, and probably to Queen Christina who had just abdicated as ruler of Sweden. Oldenburg communicated what he knew to Adam Boreel, the leader of the Dutch Collegiants, the non-sectarian creedless group which took Spinoza in after his excommunication. Oldenburg begged Boreel, a renowned theologian of the time, to refute the terrible thesis that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were imposters who created religions for political reasons. Boreel worked for five years writing an immense answer, which exists in manuscript form. Spinoza, I shall try to show, was also writing an answer of a different kind at the same time, while he was living with the Collegiants in Amsterdam and Rijnsburg, an answer that appears in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*.

Next I will suggest that the *Trois Imposteurs* grew from an advanced form of Hobbes' political evaluation of religion, to a more psychological, sociological and philosophical analysis of the three main

¹ See for example, Margaret C. Jacob, *The Radical Enlightenment: Pantheists, Freemasons and Republicans* (London: Allan & Unwin, 1981); and Paul Vernière, *Spinoza et la pensée française avant la Revolution* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1982).

² This is being looked into by Margaret Jacob and myself in the United States, by a project directed by Olivier Bloch in France, and now by an international group involving Jerom Vercruysse, Bloch, Canziani, Paganini, and others, who are planning a bibliography of clandestine literature of the period.

Western revealed religions by incorporating parts of the French translations of the *Tractatus*, and portions of the *Ethics* into the text. The text we now have is thus properly entitled *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza* in that it develops a part of Spinoza's view. Spinoza's own role in this transformation is still unknown.

Before beginning on this excursion into the underside of late 17th-century intellectual history, let me clarify some confusion concerning the topic. First, there are two works which circulated in manuscript from 1680-95 to the late Enlightenment, *De Tribus Impostoribus* and *Les Trois Imposteurs*. They are quite different. The first is shorter and deals with some details of Biblical criticism. It claims to have been written by the secretary of Frederick II in the Middle Ages.³ The second has two titles, *Les Trois Imposteurs*, and *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza*, and sometimes both. It is often bound with *La Vie de M. Spinoza*, attributed to one Jean-Maximilien Lucas, the so-called "oldest biography of Spinoza".⁴ There are dozens, hundreds of manuscripts of the French text, varying in content. There is a basic content that is approximately the same in all of the manuscripts I have seen. Then there are additional parts, including chapters drawn from the writings of Pierre Charron and Gabriel Naudé, that appear in some of the manuscripts. The manuscripts can be found all over Western and Central Europe, and in the United States and Canada.⁵ The French text was printed and suppressed in 1719, and later reprinted several times in the 18th century. I will deal only with the French text. The text always contains a criticism of Descartes, and some lines from Hobbes's *Leviathan* of 1651, which sets a lower limit on when it could have been written in the present form.⁶

Second, there are several manuscript traditions. The list given by Ira Wade misleadingly suggests the manuscripts must all be 18th-century ones, and the text also. Wade's list is mostly taken from

³ Cf. the text of *Traité des Trois Imposteurs*, edited by Pierre Retat (Saint-Etienne: Universités de la Région Rhone-Alpes 1973), p. 147. At the present time this is the most available text, a reprint of the 1777 one. Dr. Silvia Berti is bringing out an edition of the first printed text, that of 1719.

⁴ See Abraham Wolf, *The Oldest Biography of Spinoza* (New York: Dial Press 1928).

⁵ I have examined copies in Germany, Austria, The Netherlands, France and England, as well as copies at Harvard, Cornell and the University of British Columbia. No complete inventory exists, and it is hoped that the new project being organized by Bloch, Canziani, Paganini, Vercruyse and others will accomplish this.

⁶ The only known copy of the 1719 printing is at the University of California, Los Angeles. It was discovered by Silvia Berti in 1985 in the Abraham Wolf collection there, and is now being republished in Italy and The Netherlands.

18th-century collections in France. There are a large number of manuscripts in Holland which do not fit with Wade's classifications. The list given by Dunin Borkowski of manuscripts of *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza* contains mainly ones in German and Austrian libraries. The manuscripts can be grouped by title, by whether they include the five chapters from Charron and Naudé, by whether they include various front matter giving a bogus history of the work, by whether they include a letter of 1695, and other features. Some younger scholars are working on this, and hopefully will sort out all of the manuscripts presently available, and give us a plausible history of their origins and dissemination. As of the moment I would adjudge one of the six manuscripts in the Herzog August Bibliothek in Wolfenbüttel as the best text, though it must be a copy of another text. My reasons for saying this will be discussed elsewhere.⁷

Now on to our story. Henry Oldenburg, who at the time was a tutor to a young nobleman at Oxford, wrote a letter in April 1656 to his friend, Adam Boreel who was then in London. Oldenburg told Boreel the sad news that "religion falls into contempt, the raillery of the profane grows sharper, and the hearts of those who fear God are crucified." He then added,

"What I shall say next is of great concern to you. Two problems were mentioned lately, in the solution of which I seek your assistance. The first is that the whole story of the Creation seems to have been composed in order to introduce the Sabbath, and that from motives of merely political prudence. For to what purpose (says the objector) is the fatiguing labor of so many days assigned to Almighty God, when all things submit to his bidding in a single instant? It seems that that very prudent legislator and ruler, Moses, concocted the whole story on purpose, so that (when he had gained acceptance of it in the minds of his people) one certain day should be set aside on which they should solemnly and publicly worship that invisible Deity; and so that whatever Moses himself should say proceeded from that same Deity, they would observe with great humility and reverence. The other problem is that Moses certainly encouraged and excited his people to obey him and to be brave in war by hopes and promises of acquiring rich booty, and ample possessions, and that the man Christ, being more prudent than Moses, enticed his people by the hope of eternal life and happiness though aware that the soul seriously contemplating eternity would scarcely savor what is vile and low. But, Mohammed, cunning in all things enlisted all men with the good things of this world as well as of the next, and so became their master, and extended the limits of his empire much more widely than did any legislator before or after him. You see what licence this critic adopts out of love of

⁷ Ira O. Wade, *The Clandestine Organization and Diffusion of Philosophic Ideas in France from 1710-1750* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1938), esp. chap. 2; and S. von Dunin Borkowski, "Zur Textgeschichte und Textkritik der ältesten Lebensbeschreibung Benedikt Despinosas", *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* XVIII, (1904), pp. 1-34.

reasoning. I earnestly beseech you to stop his mouth and to stretch out a helping hand to me, struggling here".

Oldenburg then urged that they correspond about these views and "that these letters should not be made public". But the answer must depend "upon the solid establishment of that first pillar of all true religion, that is to say the existence of God and his care for human concerns, and upon the certainty of divine revelation. Surely all religion totters and falls when that is undermined or overthrown. You, my dear friend, will easily perceive my purpose and because of your love of God and of religion will not hesitate to fight on their behalf."⁸

The two problems Oldenburg stated appear in chapter 3 of *Les Trois Imposteurs* (though, of course, Oldenburg's letter was written in Latin and *Les Trois Imposteurs* in French).⁹

Boreel, at the time was the leader of what Kołakowski has labelled "Chrétien sans Eglise".¹⁰ He was an Oxford graduate, and a or the leading Dutch Hebraist. He had worked with two of Spinoza's teachers, Rabbis Jacob Judah Leon and Menasseh ben Israel, on the Hebrew vocalized edition of the *Mishna* of 1646. He was a central figure among the Millenarian non-confessional thinkers in Holland and England, involved with Mennonites, Quakers, Jews and such chiliasts as John Dury, Samuel Hartlib, Jan Amos Comenius and Peter Serrarius. In 1655-56, when Menasseh ben Israel was negotiating with Cromwell for the readmission of the Jews to England, Boreel was in London, and entertained Menasseh along with Robert Boyle and Oldenburg. Boreel raised problems that may have led to the disintegration of the negotiations. He left London shortly after receiving Oldenburg's letter, and set to work in Amsterdam on answering the challenge to revealed religion. Boreel was in Amsterdam when Spinoza was excommunicated, and no doubt knew of his reception into the small Collegiant group on the outskirts of the city. The Collegiants were often called the "Boreellists" after their leader.¹¹

⁸ Henry Oldenburg, *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, edited and translated by A. Rupert Hall & Marie Boas Hall, Vol. I (Madison and Milwaukee: University of Wisconsin Press, 1965), pp. 89-92.

⁹ *Les Trois Imposteurs*, Rétat edition, chap. 3, esp. pp. 38-78.

¹⁰ Leszek Kołakowski, *Chrétien sans Eglise* (Paris: NRF Gallimard, 1969). Boreel is discussed on pp. 197-199 and 243.

¹¹ Cf. Richard H. Popkin, "Some Aspects of Jewish Christian Relations in Holland and England in the 17th Century", in Jan van den Berg and Ernestine van der Wall, *Jewish Christian Relations in the 17th Century* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishing, 1988), pp. 132, and "The Lost Tribes and the Caraites", *Journal of Jewish Studies XXXVII* (1986), pp. 213-227).

By the beginning of 1657 Boreel had completed part of his answer. Oldenburg was very pleased that Boreel was arguing "that the origin of religion is truly divine and that God appoints no one but himself to be the legislator for the whole human race".¹² The correspondence of Oldenburg and of Samuel Hartlib indicates Boreel's progress in writing his tome entitled *Jesus Christ Universi humani Generis Legislator*.¹³ Oldenburg had added more to Boreel's task by telling him about, and maybe sending him a copy of Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomares*, which Oldenburg had learned about in Paris.¹⁴ Boreel finished his work in 1661, and was in failing health. A copy was made by Spinoza's patron, Peter Serrarius, at the behest of Robert Boyle.¹⁵ I found this copy in the Royal Society's collection of Boyle papers. It had apparently gotten out of order, and is bound haphazardly in three volumes.¹⁶ Francis Mercurius van Helmont also had a copy, which was copied by Henry More, who used it in his theological works, and considered it one of the most important works of the century.¹⁷

No study has yet been made of Boreel's opus. A quick review of it indicates that at least one of its aspects is that it is a refutation of the three imposters thesis mentioned by Oldenburg. Boreel insisted true religion is of divine origin and that Jesus was and is the Divine Legislator of the human race. The work is an enormous philosophical and theological attack on atheism, religious scepticism, deism, paganism, Judaism and Mohammedanism.

In the period 1656-61, Boreel was in close contact with several people who we know knew and talked to Spinoza—the Millenarian Peter Serrarius, who apparently introduced Spinoza to the Quaker leader, William Ames, and to the Quaker missionaries in Amsterdam. Boreel

¹² Oldenburg, *Correspondence*, I, Jan. 24, 1656/7, pp. 115-116.

¹³ For the revelant references, see R. H. Popkin, "Could Spinoza have known Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomares* ?", *Philosophia* 16 (1986), p.309, and notes 19-22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 309-310.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 313 n 22. The details about the making of the copy, and its large cost appear in Oldenburg's letters to Robert Boyle from 16-18 June 1665 to 16 January 1665/6 in *Correspondence*, Vols. II and III.

¹⁶ It is in volumes 12, 13 and 15 of Boyle's papers, located at the Royal Society. It seems to be several presentations of Boreel's case, in various forms. It is to be hoped that a study will be made of it soon.

¹⁷ Cf. Henry More, *The Theological Works of the Most Pious and Learned Henry More* (London, 1708), "Preface to the Reader", pp. iv-v. More said he saw Van Helmont's copy at Ragley Hall, the home of Lady Anne Conway, and copied some of it.

was also in close contact with Spinoza's friend, Peter Balling. In addition, Boreel had learned Portuguese and Spanish in order to work with various Amsterdam rabbis on the Hebrew edition and Spanish translation of the *Mishna*.¹⁸ Perhaps, evidence of a close link with Spinoza is that in 1661, Balling, who spoke Spanish, went to see Spinoza at Rijnsburg on behalf of the Amsterdam philosophical group that was interested in his ideas. Spinoza had just completed the treatise on the improvement of the understanding, which he showed Balling. Then, or immediately thereafter, Balling wrote *Light on the Candlestick*, a statement of the rational basis of religious mysticism. The short work uses many of Spinoza's terms and ideas. Balling wrote this in Dutch. Boreel did the Latin translation of the work, and the Quaker, Benjamin Furly did the English. The work became a widely disseminated statement of rational mysticism, based on Spinoza's epistemology.¹⁹

So, Boreel presumably knew what Spinoza was doing. Boreel was a close friend of Henry Oldenburg, who visited Spinoza in Rijnsburg in 1661, and formed a life-long intellectual relationship with him. Presumably, since Oldenburg was *au courant* about Boreel's work refuting the three imposters theory, and was so anxious to receive and use Boreel's answer, he would have discussed the matter with Spinoza when they met. Boreel must have known Spinoza through the Collegiants. He may have known him earlier through his associations with at least two of Spinoza's teachers, Menasseh ben Israel and Jacob Judah Leon. Boreel continued working with the Amsterdam rabbis on editing and translating ancient Jewish texts until his death.

And, presumably, Spinoza should have heard of what Boreel was working on, either from Boreel himself, or from the various Collegiant and non-conformist figures he was in contact with. Spinoza's discussions in the *Tractatus* indicate that he, too, was considering the three imposters theory and offering a quite different resolution to it.

Besides what is in Oldenburg's letter to Boreel in April 1656, other items indicate that the theory was circulating that religion was a political institution created by political leaders in order to control societies. Machiavelli, Charron, Naudé, Hobbes, and others offered this analysis of the origin of pagan religion and false Judeo-Christian

¹⁸ Cf. Popkin, "Some Aspects of Jewish Christians Relations", and *The Earliest Publication of Spinoza? The Hebrew Translation of Margaret Fell's Loving Salutation to the Seed of Abraham* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1987), Introduction.

¹⁹ On this see R. H. Popkin, "Spinoza's Relations with the Quakers in Amsterdam", *Quaker History* LXX (1984), p. 27; and Michael J. Petry, "Behmenism and Spinozism in the Religious Culture of the Netherlands, 1600-1730", in Karlfried Gröndler and Wilhelm Schmidt-Biggemann, *Spinoza in der Frühzeit seiner Religiösen Wirkung, Wolfenbüttler Studien zur Aufklärung*, Band 12, p. 112.

movements.²⁰ Most European writers, including Spinoza, thought it was obvious to every intelligent European that Mohammed was an imposter, who had created the Islamic religion for personal and political ends.²¹ Queen Christina is reported to have said around 1656 that Moses was just an imposter, who used the crossing of the Red Sea, to take political control of the Jews.²² She was also desperate to obtain a copy of the supposedly existing manuscript of *Les Trois Imposteurs*.²³ Perhaps her offer of \$1,000,000 for the manuscript led someone to write it. J. P. Marana, in the oft-printed *Letters writ by a Turkish Spy in Paris*, covering events from 1637-82, indicates that the three imposters theory began circulating in Paris around 1656.²⁴ Hobbes, in *Leviathan*, analyzed how non-revealed religions of Greece, Rome and elsewhere, developed as ways of running political societies. Although Hobbes specifically exempted Judaism and Christianity from his analysis, since they got their authority from God,²⁵ it is possible to see how someone could (and in chapter 3 of *Les Trois Imposteurs* did) extend his analysis to the roles of Moses and Jesus. Uriel da Costa, in the text of his that we have, which may have been written before his death in 1640 or 1647, asserted that all religions are man-made for human purposes, and proclaimed, "Don't be a Jew or a Christian! Be a Man!"²⁶

So I think we can say that the three imposters theory was in the air. It is, of course, a basic ground for rejecting Judaism and Christianity, and for accounting for the power of these religions.

Spinoza, in his examination of how Judaism began, and what Jesus added to it, discussed various elements of the three imposters theory, and then offered a solution which makes Moses a benign or even

²⁰ This theory is discussed in Niccolò Machiavelli's *Discourses on Livy*, in Pierre Charron's *Les Trois Veritez*, Gabriel Naudé's *Considerations sur des Coups d'Etat*, and Thomas Hobbes's *Leviathan*.

²¹ Spinoza said this in his letter to Jacob Ostens, February 1671. Spinoza, *Opera*, ed. by Carl Gebhardt, (Heidelberg, 1925). Vol. IV, p. 226.

²² Cf. Urbain Chevereaux, *La Génie de la Reine Christine* (Paris, 1655), p. 36.

²³ Cf. Gilles Ménage, *Ménagiana*, Tome IV (Paris, 1754), pp. 397-398.

²⁴ J. P. Marana, *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy in Paris* (London, 1723), Vol. V, Book III, letter of the 30th of the 7th Moon of the Year 1656, p. 130. This volume first appeared in English in 1692, and is probably not by Marana, who wrote the initial volumes in Italian, and published them in French.

²⁵ Thomas Hobbes, *De Homine*, chap. 14.

²⁶ Uriel da Costa, *A Specimen of a Human Life* (New York: Bergman Publishers 1967), where the translation of this passage is given as "He who pretends to be neither of these [Jew or Christian] and only calls himself a man, is far preferable", p. 43.

beneficent imposter, and Jesus no imposter at all, since he was not a lawgiver, a view that was pretty far removed from Boreel's.

Spinoza's picture of Judaism beginning as the result of the ancient Hebrews escaping from the Egyptian political world, and finding themselves with no laws, in a state of nature in the the desert, led to seeing Moses's role as very helpful and constructive. He organized the escaping Hebrews into a political society by asserting that the laws he imposed on them came from God.

In the fifth chapter of the *Tractatus* Spinoza developed this interpretation clearly and forcefully. Having distinguished divine law that governs all of nature from ceremonial law that regulates human behavior in special circumstances, Spinoza showed how Jewish ceremonial law began. The laws enunciated by Moses, covering moral, sanitary and ceremonial behavior "appear not as doctrines universal to all men, but as commands especially adapted to the understanding and character of the Hebrew people, and as having reference only to the welfare of the kingdom".²⁷ The Mosaic commandments are not given as prophecies. They are given solely in Moses's capacity as a lawgiver and judge. Moses did this because of the need of the Hebrews, in their circumstances, to have a legal system imposed on them. This is said in contrast to Jesus's role, which Spinoza described as follows:

"Christ, as I have said, was sent into the world, not to preserve the state, nor to lay down laws, but solely to teach the universal moral law, so we can easily understand that He wished in nowise to do away with the law of Moses inasmuch as He introduced no new laws of his own. His sole care was to teach moral doctrines, and distinguish them from the laws of the state."²⁸

(Here Spinoza sided with the Christian Judaizers like John Dury, Henry Jessey and Anna Maria van Schuurman, who insisted that the Mosaic law, especially the Fourth Commandment, was not abrogated by Christianity.)²⁹

²⁷ Benedictus de Spinoza, *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, Elwes ed. (New York: Dover, 1955), chap. V, p. 70; Gebhardt ed., (Heidelberg, 1925), Vol. III, p. 70.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71, Elwes ed.; pp. 70-71, Gebhardt ed.

²⁹ David Katz has published a study of the Sabbath observers in England, the Traskites, and those around Henry Jessey, *Sabbath and Sectarianism in Seventeenth Century England* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988.) John Dury, Anna Maria von Schurman and others argued that the 4th Commandment had not been abrogated by Jesus. Dury, in an unpublished essay in the Hartlib Papers argued that one could be a true and believing Christian and a fully observant Jew, which would mean that no Jewish laws had been abrogated by Jesus, which seems to be implied in Spinoza's discussion of Jesus as a non-lawgiver.

Moses's and Jesus's roles are carefully distinguished. Moses instituted or made laws for the Hebrews in their circumstances and within the compass of their understanding. Jesus made no laws, and just taught morality to everyone, without affecting the laws of the state. Moses's case is then examined in the light of what the Jews were like when they escaped from Egypt; "they were entirely unfit to frame a wise code of laws and to keep the sovereign power vested in the community; they were all uncultivated and sunk in a wretched slavery."³⁰ They were no longer bound by any national laws, and desperately needed a lawgiver and a ruler. They were in a state of nature, unable to reason their way out of it by holding a constitutional convention.

Spinoza then explained that because of Jewish incompetence and Moses's virtues, the latter

"made laws and ordained them for the people, taking the greatest care that they should be obeyed willingly and not through fear, being specially induced to adopt this course by the obstinate nature of the Jews, who would not have submitted to be ruled solely by contract . . . Moses therefore, by his virtue and the Divine command, introduced a religion, so that people might do their duty from devotion rather than fear".³¹

So religion was made the basis for the Mosaic legal system which covered practically all possible human behavior because the Jewish people were in no position to govern themselves. So what they ate, how they worked, how they clothed themselves, how they shaved, and so on, were made part of ceremonial law, whose force was that it was supposed to have been told to Moses by God.

Spinoza concluded the section about this by pointing out that Jewish ceremonial laws have nothing to do with blessedness, but have "reference merely to the government of the Jews, and merely temporal advantages".³² Spinoza next expressed his doubts that Christian ceremonial activities had any more status. They did not lead to blessedness, probably were not instituted by Jesus and his Apostles, and functioned only to preserve Christian societies.³³

In this analysis Spinoza did not make Moses or Jesus villains, as *Les Trois Imposteurs* does, imposing laws for their own benefit and aggrandizement. Rather, Moses did what was necessary to constitute a Hebrew state, when the Jews had fallen back into the state of nature.

"After their liberation from the intolerable bondage of the Egyptians, they were bound by no covenant to any man; and therefore, every man

³⁰ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, chap. V, p. 75, Elwes ed., p. 75, Gebhardt ed.

³¹ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, chap. V, p. 75, Elwes ed., p. 75, Gebhardt ed.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 76, Elwes ed.; p. 76, Gebhardt ed.

³³ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

entered into his natural right and was free to retain it or give it up, and transfer it to another. Being then in the state of nature, they followed the advice of Moses, in whom they chiefly trusted, and decided to transfer their right to no human being, but only to God . . . This promise, or transference of right to God, was effected in the same manner as we have conceived it to have been in ordinary societies, when men agree to divest themselves of their natural rights."³⁴

Moses was given the complete right to consult God and interpret His commands. He established the Hebrew theocracy which served to keep the community functioning for centuries. (Spinoza claimed that this sort of theocratic commonwealth can no longer be set up, because "God, however, has revealed through his Apostles that the covenant of God is no longer written in ink, or on tables of stone, but with the Spirit of God in the fleshy tables of the heart".³⁵ Hence, Spinoza's lengthy examination of the Hebrew theocracy and commonwealth was not just to show that Moses was a benign, beneficent imposter, *but* also to warn that the Hebrew commonwealth could not be reconstituted again, as various 17th-century Millenarians were trying to do.)

Spinoza took up the specific case mentioned in Oldenburg's letter to Boreel of 1656, the role of the ordinance of the Sabbath. The point at which the ancient Hebrews had transferred all their rights to Moses, and given him absolute authority was when they had so yielded up their natural rights, that "the ordinance of the Sabbath had received the force of law".³⁶ Spinoza, unlike Boreel, had answered the problems raised in the Oldenburg letter, the basic themes of *Les Trois Imposteurs*, by showing how and why Moses saved the Jews in their then existing anarchic condition, and by insisting that Jesus was not a law-giver, but was a moral teacher. Boreel could argue for the divine authority of the Bible, and of Moses's role, and that Jesus was the lawgiver of the human race. Both Spinoza and Boreel had offered divergent answers to Oldenburg's problems. Spinoza's, by putting the development of religious ceremonial law into human contexts, and into human causal sequences, made the process natural rather than supernatural. The next step of the irreligious thinkers was to make the process malign rather than benign, as occurs in *Les Trois Imposteurs*.

And so, what does Spinoza have to do with the work that emerges in the underground world of the late 18th century, *Les Trois Imposteurs ou L'Esprit de M. Spinoza*? The work circulated widely in manuscripts and was published several times. If Spinoza had lived

³⁴ *Ibid.*, chap. XVII, pp. 218-219, Elwes ed; p. 205, Gebhardt ed.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, chap. XVIII, p. 237, Elwes ed.; p. 221, Gebhardt ed.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. V, p. 71, Elwes ed.; p. 71, Gebhardt ed.

in the world of the literary agent, he or his heirs could have collected much money in the form of royalties. A sizeable part of the text of *Les Trois Imposteurs* is either word for word, or obvious paraphrase, from the French translation of the *Tractatus*, which appeared in 1678.³⁷ Dr. Silvia Berti of Milan has found that a large part of chapter 2 of *Les Trois Imposteurs* is a translation of the Appendix of Book I of Spinoza's *Ethics* into French.³⁸ (This would be the first known appearance of any part of the *Ethics* in French.)

If Spinoza was not a participant in the composition of *Les Trois Imposteurs*, then its authors had to have access to the *Ethics*, either after it was published in 1677, or in the manuscript form that was in existence by 1675. If the text was taken from the published version, Spinoza by then had passed from the scene and could not have been involved. If this was the case, then the portions of the *Ethics* translated into French were done independently of Spinoza.

The little we know of the preparation of the French translation of *Tractatus* allows for two possibilities, one that Spinoza was involved with the translator and maybe with his more seditious efforts at disseminating Spinoza's views about organized religion, or the other, that the French translation, both as an undertaking, and as a publication, postdates Spinoza, and that he knew nothing about it. If the second is the case, then Spinoza would have had nothing to do with the way his writings were used in the final composition of *Les Trois Imposteurs*.

The first possibility is intriguing and deserves some investigations. The French translation is attributed to a M. Saint-Glain, a Huguenot refugee.³⁹ *La Vie de M. Spinoza*, often published with, or copied with, *Les Trois Imposteurs ou L'Esprit de M. Spinoza*, is attributed to Jean-Maximilien Lucas, also a Huguenot refugee. The information naming Saint-Glain comes from Charles Saint-Evremond and Pierre Desmaizeaux, both of whom learned this, they say, from one Doctor Henri Morelli, a friend of Spinoza's.⁴⁰ Morelli, according to Saint-Evremond's biographical note on him, was an Egyptian Jew, Henriquez Morales, who received his medical training in Italy and

³⁷ Cf. Silvia Berti, "'La Vie et l'Esprit de Spinoza' (1719) e la prima traduzione francese dell' 'Ethica'", *Rivista Storica Italiana* XCVIII (1986), pp. 31 ff.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 31-32.

³⁹ On what is known about M. Saint-Glain, see the new edition of K. O. Meinsma, *Spinoza et son cercle* (Paris: Vrin, 1983), pp. 6-7

⁴⁰ See Pierre Bayle, *Lettres*, ed. by Pierre Desmaizeaux, (Amsterdam, 1729), Tome I, p. 143.

Holland.⁴¹ He became a good friend of Spinoza's, and became Saint-Evremond's doctor. He later became the doctor of the great Parisian courtesan, Ninon de l'Enclos, and then the doctor of the Countess of Sandwich in England, the daughter of the notorious Earl of Rochester. Bayle's editor, Desmaizeaux, knew Morelli in England, and around 1710-1712 asked him for information about Spinoza's meeting with the Prince of Condé in 1673.⁴² Morelli's data, as presented by Desmaizeaux, in notes in his edition of Bayle's letters in the *Oeuvres diverses*, involved Spinoza's having met the Prince, having spent some time with him, and having been offered 1,000 écus to become Condé's house philosopher at Chantilly. Morelli claimed Spinoza was seriously tempted, and that he discussed the matter several times with Morelli. Spinoza, we are told, finally decided that Condé, with all of his power, could not guarantee Spinoza's safety amongst the Catholic bigots in France. So, Spinoza stayed in Holland.⁴³

Morelli gave the impression that he was close to Spinoza in the latter's last years. Only Morelli knew who the French translator was. Other data indicate that from 1670, when Spinoza met Saint-Evremond, and 1672, when he met the French military commander, Col. J. B. Stoupe, the former French Protestant pastor in London, Spinoza seems to have entered into the circle of the *libertin* Protestant entourage around the Prince of Condé, many of whom stayed in Holland after the French invasion. Saint-Glain was apparently one of these people. So, Spinoza may have known him, and been a party to planning a French edition of the *Tractatus*, with all three of its catchy false titles, *La Clef du Sanctuaire*, *Traité des Ceremonies superstitieuses des Juifs tant anciens que modernes*, and *Reflexions curieuses d'un esprit des-interessé sur les Matieres les plus importantes au salut tant public que particulier*.⁴⁴ The French translation became of great importance in the dispersion of Spinoza's ideas, and was still being

⁴¹ What we know about Morelli appears in Charles Saint-Evremond, *Oeuvres de Monsieur de St.-Evremond*, ed. by Pierre Desmaizeaux (Amsterdam, 1726), Vol. V, pp. 274-275, and the notes by Desmaizeaux in Pierre Bayle's *Oeuvres diverses*, Vol. IV (Amsterdam, 1729), p. 872.

⁴² Desmaizeaux, *Lettres de Bayle*, notes to a letter from 1706. The "letter" is actually just a portion of the review of Colerus' *Vie de M. Spinoza* in the *Mémoires de Trévoux*. On Desmaizeaux's attempt to unravel the story about Spinoza and the Prince of Condé, see R. H. Popkin, "Serendipity at the Clark: Spinoza and the Prince of Condé", *The Clark Newsletter*, No. 10, Spring 1986, pp. 4-7.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁴ The three French titles sometimes appear in the same volume. Various places of publication are given—Leiden for *La Clef du Sanctuaire*, Amsterdam for *Ceremonies superstitieuses*, and Cologne for *Reflexions curieuses*. All are dated 1678.

read over a century later. Tom Paine cited it in his *Age of Reason* which he wrote in 1793 in Paris.⁴⁵ Hegel referred to it in a comment to the 1802 editor of Spinoza's *Opera*.⁴⁶ Saint-Glain might have been involved in extending the influence and impact of Spinoza's most irreligious ideas, perhaps even as an author or co-author of *Les Trois Imposteurs* with Spinoza's knowledge and acquiescence.

At the present time we know very little about Spinoza's relations with the Condé circle, and little about when and why the French translation of the *Tractatus* was made. A speculative possibility is that, as Spinoza realized that the bigots would scream if he published the *Ethics*, he arranged, while alive and of sound mind, for the *Opera Posthuma* and the French translation of the *Tractatus*, and the Dutch edition of his works, plus the most provocative use of his ideas in *Les Trois Imposteurs*. If there is anything to this speculation, which future research may confirm, modify or reject, then *Les Trois Imposteurs* might deserve its other title, *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza*.

On the other hand, as far as we presently know, Spinoza played no part in arranging for the posthumous dissemination of his work beyond having some role in planning the *Opera Posthuma*, and its Dutch edition. Then, what should we say of Spinoza's role in the history of the development of the text of *Les Trois Imposteurs*? I hope that the material presented here has shown (a) that Spinoza was aware of the core statement of the three imposters theory, as reported by Oldenburg to Boreel in 1656, (b) that the *Tractatus* is in part an attempt to offer a benign solution, to wit, that Moses instituted the Hebrew religion to rescue the escapees from Egypt from the anarchy of the state of nature, and he made it acceptable by contending that the religion he was instituting was of divine origin. Jesus was not an imposter, since contrary to Boreel, he was not a law-giver and he instituted no new laws or ceremonies. He only stated clearly the moral law that all rational men would accept on the basis of reason. Mohammed, on the other hand, as Spinoza told Jacob Ostens, was not a true Prophet.

"it clearly follows from my principles that he was an imposter, seeing that he entirely took away that freedom which Universal Religion, revealed

⁴⁵ Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason*, in *The Writings of Thomas Paine*, edited by Moncure Daniel Conway (New York and London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1891, p. 273.

⁴⁶ See the introductory material of the 1802 edition of Spinoza's *Opera*, ed. by Paulus, the first publication of the works since 1677. It was in the French translation of the *Tractatus* that the footnotes to the text first appeared. They were added in Latin, from a handwritten copy at the University of Leiden in the 1802 Jena edition.

by the natural and prophetic light, allows, and which I have shown ought to be fully allowed."⁴⁷

(c) that Spinoza, in developing his theory of how religions arise and why they persist and are accepted, presented what was taken over, in Spinoza's own words, as the principal theory of *Les Trois Imposteurs*. Spinoza, willingly or unknowingly, supplied the theoretical side of the work.

Still, in emphasizing only the critique of religion, *Les Trois Imposteurs* pretty much ignored Spinoza's positive theology, though Spinoza's definition of God appears, and ignored Spinoza's positive theory of the role of religion in a human world. The thesis of *Les Trois Imposteurs* is the irreligious side of Spinoza. The more spiritual and more practical sides are ignored. Spinoza is not mentioned in the text, only in one of the main versions of the title. Perhaps the author or authors thought that in so distilling Spinoza's ideas, they were presenting the true *esprit de M. Spinoza*. One way or another, the three imposter theme plays a significant role in Spinoza's own presentation of his theory, and willingly or not, he provided the basis for the finished product. And the finished product circulated so widely through the Republic of Letters in so many clandestine copies that it is still to be reckoned with in evaluating Spinoza's influence on the Age of Reason. Perhaps in a decade or two we may be able to trace the whole history of the work from the 1656 version to the finished product, its dispersion and its influence. For it spread through the Old and New Worlds and was being issued as atheist propaganda even at the middle of the 19th century.⁴⁸ The view expressed in it counters the acceptance in some historical sense of the Judaeo-Christian tradition; *L'Esprit de M. Spinoza* helped to develop the secular mentality of the late 18th century, while the actual metaphysics of Spinoza helped underwrite a new naturalistic view of the world.

⁴⁷ Spinoza's letter to Jacob Ostens, Gebhardt ed., IV, p. 226; Abraham Wolf, *The Correspondence of Spinoza* (London: Allan & Unwin, 1928, p. 226.

⁴⁸ *The Three Imposters*, translated (with notes and illustrations) from the French edition of this work, published at Amsterdam 1776, published by J. Myles, Dundee 1844; and republished by G. Vale, New York, 1846. Myles said he was reissuing it at a very cheap price so that working class people could obtain it.

IX

THE MARRANOS OF AMSTERDAM*

In the last several decades there has been a growing interest in the dramatic story of the Marranos, the so-called secret Jews of Spain and Portugal. Victims of forced conversion and pitiless persecution by the Inquisition, they somehow managed to preserve some kind of Jewish identity through many, many generations. Their heroic dedication and their survival have been made into one of the great romances of Jewish history in the modern age, showing that the spark of belief and adherence to the faith could not be exterminated no matter how severely the Inquisitors policed and tormented them. And then, as the counter to this wonderful tale, is the supposed end of the affair, when some of the survivors arrived in Amsterdam in the mid-17th century, and were able to set up the first genuine free Jewish community in the Western world. Almost as soon as they were able to flourish as free practicing Jews, they, the former victims, became the persecutors of great modern free spirits like Baruch de Spinoza. They expelled him, forbade any member of the congregation to have anything to do with him, and they became, supposedly, narrow-minded defenders of rigid orthodoxy as soon as they were free from Inquisitional persecution.

These dramatic developments cover the period from the end of the 14th century in Spain until the middle of the 17th century in Amsterdam. The Catholics of Spain had struggled for over six hundred years to reconquer the country from the Moorish invaders. By the late 14th century, most of the country had been retaken, but the population was still heavily Moslem and Jewish. (Jews had lived in Iberia from very ancient times, before the Christian era, and flourished much of the time under the often tolerant Moorish caliphs.) Beginning in 1391, zealous Spanish Christians sought to reconquer the population by forcibly converting them. Mobs led by St. Vincent Ferrar dragged Jews into churches, and baptized them against their will. By force and violence, much of the Jewish population (a few hundred thousand people) had been converted. These people were called New Christians, to distinguish them from the older Christian population.

Almost immediately, Jewish converts began to rise in society, especially in the one area of endeavor that had previously been barred

* A revised version of this paper appeared in *The New Republic* of May, 1990.

to them—the Church. The rabbi of Burgos, Solomon Ha-Levi, became the Bishop of Burgos, Pablo da Santa Maria. Others became priests, Christian leaders. Old Christians complained that the New Christians were really fake Christians, Christians on the outside, but secretly Jewish on the inside. They were Marranos, a term that is supposed to derive from a slang expression for pig, and from Mohammed's horse, which was neither a horse, nor a bird, nor . . .

Investigations revealed monasteries taken over by Marranos, false Christians, where they carried on Jewish practices. All sort of important New Christians were found keeping up various Jewish practices, such as not eating pork, getting dressed up for the Sabbath, not working on Saturday, bathing, etc. And, since a sizeable part of the original Jewish population had not been converted, the New Christians were found to be involved with (often related to) non-Christians.

The Old Christian Spanish horror at the social and religious scene a century after the forced conversions led to two climactic developments. The first was the establishment of the Spanish Inquisition in 1484, to ferret out the backsliders and enforce conformity to the Catholic faith. Backsliders were heretics, from the Christian point of view, unlike unconverted Jews, who as non-Christians could not be bad or false Christians.

The Inquisition quickly became a terrorizing police force, seeking evidence of "judaizing" and punishing it most severely. People were tortured, forced to confess, fined enormously, exiled, and in unrepentant cases, burned at the stake. (The burning of heretics became one of the great public entertainments in Spain.)

The second development was to get rid of the non-Christian population. After the conquest of Granada in 1492, the entire territory of Spain was in Christian hands. In the Moorish capital, the Alhambra, King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, issued an order expelling all of the unconverted Jews as of August 1492. (Moslems were expelled shortly thereafter.) From then on it was completely illegal to be a Jew in Spain. Many of the Jews fled to Portugal, where five years later they were trapped by a royal decree forbidding them to remain unconverted, and forbidding them to leave the kingdom.

Thus, after 1492 in Spain and 1497 in Portugal, Judaism had been legally abolished and an all-powerful Inquisitional system was established in both countries to root out any surviving Jewish activities. The Inquisition became convinced that New Christians by their very nature (being descended from Jews), were bound to be Marranos, false Christians and secret Jews. So, people adhering to any portion of their heritage had to hide their activities and even their genealogies.

The persecutions supposedly produced a hard core of heroic victims, living a double life in order to hang on to their Jewish roots. And it is some of the descendants of these people who emerged on the world stage in Amsterdam in the 17th century. In recent years much more has been learned about the history of these Amsterdam Marranos. After World War II, the French scholar I. S. Révah ferreted out histories of various personages in what had been, up to then, almost totally unusable archives of the Portuguese Inquisition in Lisbon. He and Haim Beinart of Jerusalem greatly enriched our knowledge about what actually happened to these people in Iberia, how they lived, and what they did when they escaped to France, Italy and the Spanish and Dutch Netherlands. Many scholars, myself included, found important material in the archives of the Amsterdam Synagogue, which only became available in 1961. Two very detailed studies, the cases of Isaac Cardoso and Isaac Orobio de Castro, the first by Yosef Yerushalmi, *From Spanish Court to Italian Ghetto* (New York: Columbia 1971), the other, just translated from the Hebrew by Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), portray two significant figures who fled Spain in the mid-17th century, one to Italy and the other to Amsterdam, where they became very well known intellectuals in the Sephardic (Iberian Jewish) world.

Much recent attention has been given to examining the great writers of Spain's Golden Age who were Marranos, presumably expressing a Marrano point of view. Similarly there has been interest in the Jewish background of some of the most important Iberian Christian figures of the 16th century, and in that of various Renaissance philosophers who were descendants of New Christians. Scholars have sought to show that these people had a special perspective because of their situation and background, outcasts from the Christian world and unable to live in a Jewish world.

On the less glamorous side, attempts have been made to understand what happened in the confrontation between the radical Marrano and Jewish thinkers, Uriel da Costa, Juan de Prado and Spinoza, and the supposedly rigid orthodox community of the Amsterdam Synagogue. Révah opened up new doors by finding part of the story. Others have offered bits and pieces that may explain some of what occurred. By now we are learning that the traditional picture must be false, but are not sure how it should be seen. The cases of these so-called heretics have been known principally from what was written in the late 17th century by Spinoza's friends and defenders. Now, through the work of Yosef Kaplan and Daniel Swetschinski, I think we

are getting a somewhat different perspective which may demystify the clash, while accounting for how the Amsterdam Jewish community, consisting almost entirely of Marranos recently arrived from Iberia, France or Italy, could have played so great a role in the creation of the modern intellectual world, though clinging to traditions and views which seem to be conservative if not down-right reactionary. See especially Kaplan's *From Christianity to Judaism*; the volume of papers of a conference held in Jerusalem in 1985, on *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, edited by Kaplan, H. Mechoulam and R. H. Popkin (Leiden: Brill 1989); some essays in *Dutch Jewish History II* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989); and in *Jewish History, Essays presented to Chimon Abramsky* (London: Peter Halban, 1988); a new translation of Spinoza's *Theological-Political Tractatus* by Samuel Shirley (Leiden: Brill, 1989); the essay by Daniel Swetschinski in the catalogue of the 1989 exhibition in the Amsterdam Jewish Historical Museum on Lopes Suasso and his son; the special issue of *Studia Rosenthaliana*, Fall 1989; Proceedings of the 5th International Symposium on the History of the Jews in The Netherlands 1989; and *Spinoza and Other Heretics* by Y. Yovel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989).

Kaplan's study is of genuinely major importance. He shows from surviving records what Marrano life was like for middle-class Spanish and Portuguese "secret Jews". He shows us what their truncated and distorted Judaism consisted of, how they practiced it, and how they were constantly threatened by fear of someone disclosing their practices and views to the Inquisition. Kaplan shows us in sharp detail what happened to a leader of a Marrano group, Orobio, when he fled Spain, and went first to Toulouse where he became a professor in the medical school, still living a covert Jewish life while being an ostensible Christian, and finally what happened when he arrived in Amsterdam and managed to find his way into Jewish orthodoxy and conformity. There he became the intellectual giant of the Jewish community who debated leading Christian thinkers.

With amazing scholarly detective work, Kaplan has pieced together the details showing how a group of New Christians carried on their "Jewish" religion. Using Inquisitional and other records, and later writing of Orobio and others, a picture is presented of a group of people born on the Spanish-Portuguese border, where they or their parents had fled to avoid persecution, who moved back into Spain in the first decades of the 17th century. They had businesses or trades, and enjoyed a degree of *proteksia*. Some like Orobio and Juan de Prado studied medicine and theology at the Catholic University of Alcala, and earned substantial livings as doctors. Their visible,

outward life went on indistinguishably from that of their neighbors. (From the Inquisition records we know exactly what possessions Orobio had, since they were inventoried by the Inquisitors, to ensure he could pay the fine they intended to assess.) However, as they all tell the Inquisition when caught, early on they were told by someone, usually a parent or important relative, that they are not Christians, and that they believe in the Law of Moses, and will only be saved in this belief. They cannot avoid Christian practices, but they can show their commitment to the Law of Moses by minimizing their eating of pork, by carrying on, when not observed, what they considered Jewish fasts weekly, and a great fast once a year, by trying to make Saturday a feast day, for which they bathe and change clothes, and by trying to celebrate a "special dinner" in the spring.

This "judaism" of early 17th century Spain was what was handed down seven or eight generations after the last legal practice of Judaism had been carried on in Iberia! No rabbis or teachers of Judaism, or practitioners of traditional Judaism were around to instruct people. A kind of camaraderie developed as, for instance, people found others who went for long walks while they were fasting. Some people, like Orobio, became central in guiding others, and imparting what they knew of Jewish rituals and prayers.

This picture of secret Judaism is remarkably well documented by Kaplan. The principal source, the records of the Inquisition may be questioned, but there is much corroboration from testimonies all over the world, and from accounts written outside of Iberia—in France, Holland and elsewhere. One questionable element is that people caught by the Inquisition, tended to blame their judaizing on someone either dead or outside of the Spanish world. So, Orobio may have become even more important once he had escaped.

Kaplan shows how the whole family and friendship group would try to cope when somebody in the group was questioned by the Inquisition; how they attempted to establish alibis for each other, bought off witnesses, greased the palms of corrupt Inquisitional types, and used whatever clout they had with people in authority; how people sought by the Inquisition would sneak off to *converso* communities in the south of France (which were nominally Christian), where they had friends or relatives; how people would manage to get Inquisitional sentences and penalties reduced. A well worked out survival system was developed which enabled fairly large groups to persevere, and function socially and economically, and to pass on their version of Judaism from generation to generation. (And, it should be noted that theirs was also a quite Christianized version of Judaism, with the salvation of each individual as its goal.)

The dynamics of the Marrano world in Iberia are thus made clearer. But why did traces persist from the early 15th century until the present? (Surviving groups have turned up in the twentieth century in Iberia and in the Americas. Recently there has been excitement about finding descendants of Marranos in New Mexico.) One answer frequently discussed is that the Marranos had no choice. The Inquisitional world would not let them assimilate. It counted them as different, sadly and badly different if they were of Jewish ancestry, suspect and assumed to be guilty. The Portuguese Inquisition, until the latter part of the 18th century, kept records on who was half Jewish, quarter Jewish, an eighth Jewish, sixteenth Jewish, and beyond that, part Jewish. Today in Spain and Portugal people seem to *know* who has a trace of Marrano blood. And this is an ongoing theme of Iberian and Latin American literature.

There was no process by which one could move from being a Marrano to being an accepted normal Christian. The Marrano problem begun in 1391 and intensified after 1492, led to many moving to Portugal where they were forcibly converted. It is this group that became the hard-core of the Marrano problem. Most of the people we know about who were secret Judaizers descend from this Spanish-Portuguese group. They moved back and forth between Spain and Portugal as the situation in one country became better than the other, or they moved to France where New Christian colonies existed, some of which had royal protection.

But few Marranos moved to places where Jews could legally practice their religion, like Italy, or the Ottoman Empire. Most Marranos tried to live their lives in Spanish and Portuguese territory, or in France. In all of these locations they would have had to be officially Christians. Thus, no matter how heroic their attachment to Judaism was, they still opted for the dangerous double life of Marranos, rather than for the expatriate life in a genuine Jewish community, and they managed to live fairly well. And, as B. Netanayu showed in his *Marranos of Spain* (New York: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1966), most rabbis in Jewish communities in North Africa, Greece and Turkey, considered the Marranos as non-Jews rather than secret Jews, principally because they stayed in Iberia.

When the situation became too dangerous, they had no choice but to flee. Orobio de Castro, after being arrested and tortured, knew he had to uproot himself and his family. His college mate, Juan de Prado, knew that because Orobio and others had been caught he had to leave before he was arrested. Spinoza's parents, having once been caught by the Inquisition, realized they had to leave Iberia, since twice convicted Judaizers were sentenced to death.

From the mid-16th century onward, Marranos moved in fairly large numbers to the Spanish Netherlands, where they lived and flourished as New Christians far away from centers of Inquisitional activity. Because of networks of relatives, in-laws, and associates, all over Iberia and the Iberian colonies, they were better able to carry on overseas business, trading and banking than ordinary European merchants of the day.

The Dutch rebellion began in the 1560s as a result of the attempt by Philip II to impose Inquisitional authority over the Netherlands. As the Dutch secured control over the northern Netherlands, some Marrano merchants moved there, and started the Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam and other Dutch cities. Soon they had established the first free European Jewish community, so free that it did not live in a ghetto, could carry on its religious and cultural activities without hindrance, and could participate in the economic miracle of 17th-century Holland, sharing in the "embarrassment of riches" that pervaded Dutch life of the period.

The character of that Jewish community has been painted mainly from the point of view of the fanatics who escaped persecution in Iberia and now turned to persecuting the rational and moral Uriel da Costa, Juan de Prado and Spinoza.

People, raised in Catholic countries, speaking Spanish or Portuguese, arrived in The Netherlands. They gravitated toward the community for such people, the Sephardic Jewish group. In Amsterdam this group was self-created and self-taught. It was not built upon a previously existing Jewish community. It was started in the first decade of the 17th century by Iberian refugees. Its best known rabbis did not have traditional Jewish training. Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel, renowned in the Christian world, as *the* Jewish philosopher of the age, came as a teenager to Amsterdam. Born in La Rochelle, France, he was raised in Lisbon. He made his way to Amsterdam, and by age 18 was teaching Hebrew in a school. He soon became the first Hebrew printer in The Netherlands, and the expert for the Christian world on Jewish subjects. Saul Levi Mortera, who became the chief rabbi of the Sephardic community, was a German Jew from Venice, who had some early Jewish training, but at age 13 went off to Paris with a famous Marrano doctor, Elijah de Montalto, the Queen's physician. Mortera was Montalto's secretary at the Louvre until 1616, when the doctor died. Mortera took the body to Holland for burial, and then stayed there, directing Jewish activities. Though Mortera is called "a renowned Talmudist" in the Spinoza literature, there is no evidence that he had more than a boy's education in Jewish texts.

Kaplan presents a most interesting picture of this community. It was very unusual in that the members had little or no Jewish background, and there was no one in the religious leadership who really knew what those who had traditional Jewish upbringing knew. One way of putting it is that they knew Judaism as Christians might explain it. There was one early member, Abraham Cohen Herrera (hardly mentioned in the recent books and articles), who was extremely learned in Jewish matters. He was from Florence, where he learned European philosophy and traditional Judaism (apparently at home. His grandfather was the rabbi of Cordoba until 1492.) He then studied the Lurianic Kabbala and was one of the very few persons in northern Europe who knew the new Kabbalistic theory. After being captured in Spain, and made prisoner in England, he joined the Amsterdam community, where he lived until he died in 1635. He was unique in the community for his worldly and Jewish learning, both Talmudic and Kabbalistic. Though he apparently took no active role, he appears to have imparted some of his knowledge and some of his Kabbalistic mysticism to Menasseh ben Israel and Isaac Aboab (who became chief rabbi much later).

A school system was developed to educate Marranos to be Jews, and to give a Jewish education of sorts to children of ex-Marranos. Kaplan and Swetschinski give us a picture of what was involved. Most of the Marranos who came to Amsterdam knew no Hebrew, and little about actual Jewish practices. A crash course had to be offered, with enough information to make the transition from Marrano life to Jewish life possible and intelligible. A sort of "Judaism made easy" developed, in which basic practices were established, with a fair amount of leeway for people who found their adoption difficult. Bible study, Jewish history, Jewish answers to Christian arguments and claims, and elementary Hebrew were the principal subjects, all carried on in Spanish. Talmudic study was the last and most advanced subject, rather than the basic core.

Kaplan's pictures of Juan de Prado's arrival in Amsterdam in 1655, and Orobio de Castro's in 1661, show what happened in the case of two major intellectuals, trained in Spanish Catholic theology. They were given some idea of what was expected of them and as much explanation and rationale as could be provided. A rabbi Moses Aguilar, who knew the rules and regulations, could tell them what they were supposed to do. Other rabbis, principally Aboab (who returned from Brazil in 1654), and Mortera patiently discussed problems. But Prado found the practices and beliefs of orthodox Judaism unintelligible, and wanted to work out a rational Judaism. Orobio was, with a

fair amount of reservation, willing to accept Judaism on faith. (Kaplan suggests that he adopted the skeptical fideism of Montaigne and Sanches when he was in southern France, and applied this to whatever doubts he had.) Both saw the problem of belief in terms of their scholastic background, and their rejection of Christianity. They came to opposite resolutions, so that Prado could not stay within the community because he could not accept what they believed, and they would not put up with his rational Judaism. Orobio was willing to accept what he could not rationally believe, and became the philosophical theologian and defender of Amsterdam Judaism.

Most people who joined the community were businessmen. They did not have much time for study, but were willing to spend some time learning about Judaism. In some cases, we know that they learned little Hebrew, and carried on their Judaism in Spanish. (Menasseh translated prayers and other Jewish materials into Spanish. An edition of the *Mishna* was also being prepared in Spanish in 1661, but was never published.) Sermons were given in Spanish and Portuguese, dealing principally with moral themes in Biblical terms. Two Spanish literary societies were established to keep up Iberian and classical culture.

For understanding the community, it is critical to note that it was run by the *parnassim*, directors, who were not rabbis, but who hired and fired the rabbis. Members were expected to take part in various social activities, such as helping the sick and the poor. According to the regulations, developed by the groups that joined together in 1639, after much fighting, one could not be a *parnas* until one had been a member for three years. The *parnassim* chose their successors. The large majority of them were businessmen, engaged in international trade.

This is the group that we are told could not put up with "Spinoza and other heretics". From as early as 1617, there was trouble with "some free-thinkers". One David Farrar caused trouble by insisting on rational explanations and interpretations of Biblical verses. Two recent studies by M. Bodian and H.P. Salomon, tell us about this early case. The Amsterdam community did not know what to do, so they sent a delegation to Venice to consult with rabbis there. Mortera, only recently arrived in Amsterdam, was a delegate. In Venice they were given a text of excommunication, the same horrendous text later used in the case of Spinoza (showing there was nothing personal involved). One important rabbi, Leon de Modena, showed sympathy for Farrar's rationalism.

Shortly after this, the community was beset by the arrival of Uriel da Costa from Portugal, who almost immediately began challenging

the community's version of Judaism as contrasted to his own. Da Costa, who has been made the precursor of Spinoza, is known from his initial quarrels, and from his posthumously published autobiography. Early documents show that he disagreed with normative Judaism, and contended for a kind of Sadduceanism, denying the immortality of the soul, and some crucial Jewish practices. His book was destroyed, and he excommunicated. From his autobiography we learn that he was readmitted years later after recanting his heresies, being physically chastised in the Synagogue, and forced to lie prone in the doorway while the congregation walked over him. Once reconciled, he began arguing again, was excommunicated a second time, and in despair committed suicide.

Da Costa's case, supposedly coming to its grim climax in 1640, when Spinoza was eight years old, has been taken as showing how unfair and intolerant the Jewish community of Amsterdam already was, even before Spinoza's case. However, this is a construction *after* the fact. Da Costa's autobiography only appeared in 1687, as an appendix to the so-called "friendly dispute" between Orobio and the Protestant theologian, Philip van Limborch, published by the latter. Before this, Da Costa was hardly known, and his excruciating punishment is only mentioned by one German theologian, who heard about it second hand long after the event. The autobiography was printed from a Latin manuscript not in Da Costa's hand. It does not correspond to the facts now known about Da Costa's life, and it leaves out large portions of his life. So, some of us have become suspicious that it may not be an accurate account. What is more significant is that whatever happened to poor Da Costa, he only became an important historical figure *after* Spinoza, and was immediately used to help explain Spinoza, and to create a very negative picture of the Amsterdam Jewish community. Since the end of the 17th century, Da Costa has been seen as Spinoza's predecessor, and possibly a vital source of Spinoza's rational rejection of Jewish orthodoxy. Sentimental romantic pictures from 19th-century Germany show little Spinoza sitting on Da Costa's lap, imbibing enlightened views that would liberate him from darkness and superstition. But, in the mid-17th century, Da Costa is never cited by Spinoza or anyone else as a hero, a martyr, or a predecessor. The autobiography has great passages, and is an impressive document. But when or where it fits in modern intellectual history remains to be discovered.

Closer to the date of Spinoza's excommunication, much more has been found. Gebhardt and Révah discovered a very important "heretic", involved with Spinoza, namely Orobio's classmate from Alcalá,

Dr. Juan de Prado. He left Spain when Orobio's world collapsed, but left in style, as the personal physician of a Spanish bishop being elevated to Cardinal in Rome. Prado, then in his 40s, took his family to Italy, and then went to Hamburg, where he stayed with the wealthy Jewish banker, Diego Teixeira. Prado was there in 1654 when Queen Christina of Sweden arrived at the banker's house just after her abdication. Prado greeted her as the long expected Messiah, adding, but who would have thought it would be a woman! Prado moved to Amsterdam, where he became an impoverished member of the Jewish community, and a participant in the intellectual milieu of Christian scholars at the Dutch and Belgian universities. He came to know Spinoza in 1655, and they became central figures in a budding critical rebellion in the Synagogue.

Orobio said that Prado was already sceptical of religion, Jewish or Christian, in Spain. In Amsterdam, he displayed his criticism, using material from the great heretical work of 1655, *Men before Adam* by the French Marrano, Isaac La Peyrère, secretary of the Prince of Condé. La Peyrère was in Amsterdam then getting his book published (at Queen Christina's expense). He was known to Menasseh ben Israel, who was writing a refutation of his work. La Peyrère challenged the historicity and accuracy of the Biblical text, questioned whether Moses was the author of the first five books, and insisted that the world was much older than that of Biblical chronology.

All we know about Prado's views is from Orobio's answers to him, and from two reports Révah uncovered in the Inquisition files about a meeting in 1659 of a theological discussion club, where both Spinoza and Prado were present, and apparently held similar views. Yovel tries to restrict Prado's outlook in order to show Spinoza's originality and uniqueness. We actually do not have enough information to tell if (a) Prado was the real precursor of Spinoza, and (b) if they held approximately the same views, or different ones. But we do know that they were both challenged in the summer of 1656, and ordered to recant. Prado did, and at that point in the Synagogue records, Spinoza's excommunication was officially entered in the book, weeks after it was declared. Prado fought for a couple of years while being a Marrano among the Jews, trying to convince Mortera of his critical points. He was finally excommunicated, and went to Belgium, where he became a New Christian again. In 1656, Prado was obviously much more important than Spinoza. He was an established scholar, consulted by professors at Utrecht and Leiden. He claimed he could have been a professor at either institution if he had been willing to convert. In the same year Spinoza, on the other hand, was just a 23-year old businessman.

The excommunication of Spinoza, like the condemnation of Galileo, has been taken as one of the great events which separates modernity from the dark ages. As Spinoza became a major figure in European thought, circa 1700, what happened to him became the prism through which enlightened people saw their history.

On July 27, 1656, Rabbi Isaac Aboab de Fonseca, on behalf of the Amsterdam congregation, announced in the Synagogue that "having long known of the evil opinions and acts of Baruch de Spinoza, they [the congregation officials] have endeavored by various means and promises, to turn him from his evil ways. But having failed to make him mend his wicked ways, and, on the contrary, daily receiving more and serious information about the abominable heresies which he practiced and taught and about his monstrous deeds, and for having for this numerous trustworthy witnesses who have deposed and born witness to this effect in the presence of the said Espinoza, they became convinced of the truth of this matter; and after all of this has been investigated in the presence of the honorable rabbis, they have decided, with their consent, that the said Espinoza should be excommunicated and expelled from the people of Israel." Then he declared, "By decree of the angels and by command of the holy men, we excommunicate, expel, curse and damn Baruch de Espinoza, with the consent of God, Blessed be He, and with the consent of the entire holy congregation, and in front of these holy scrolls with the 613 precepts which are written therein...Cursed be he by day and cursed be he by night; cursed be he when he lies down and cursed be he when he rises up. Cursed be he when he goes out and cursed be he when he comes in...all the curses that are written in this book shall lie upon him, and the Lord shall blot out his name from under heaven..." After all of this, the congregants were told "That no one should communicate with him neither in writing nor accord him any favor nor stay with him under the same roof nor within four cubits in his vicinity; nor shall he read any treatise composed or written by him."

In spite of all the bombast, taken from a formula for excommunication that the Amsterdam community acquired from the Venetian one in 1617, it was never made specific what abominable heresies Spinoza practiced or taught, and what his monstrous deeds were. Much has been and still is being written hypothesizing and speculating about what must have been the case. But after all these years, I think we have to admit we just do not know exactly why Spinoza was excommunicated.

However, the case has usually been made that he had been excommunicated for thinking for himself! His excommunicators must

be pre-enlightenment villains. So the early biographies by Colerus and Lucas present Spinoza as the hero; the Jewish community, led by Spinoza's enemies, Mortera *et al.* the villains. Spinoza himself, in the papers that remain, does not discuss the excommunication. (He apparently was not present.) Colerus, around 1700, tried to find out what actually took place at the excommunication, and could find nobody who was there or who knew. So, he looked in a Christian textbook about Judaism to find out what an excommunication would have been like. The formulation quoted above appears only in the record book of the Amsterdam Synagogue, not available until fairly recently.

It is presumed that a 200-page document, in Spanish, that was in Spinoza's possession when he died in 1677, was his answer to the Synagogue. We have no information about what was in the document, but people have surmised that it was an early draft of his *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*. Yovel goes further, and says the rabbis had a copy, a claim for which there is no evidence (except that Colerus mentions this but gives no supporting data).

Nothing is said about Spinoza in the Synagogue records after the excommunication. This has sometimes been taken as evidence that the community hated him so much, as the excommunication text indicates, that they expunged all references to him! But that presumes there were references. Maybe the epoch-making event, from Prado's and Spinoza's perspective, was a non-event from the point of view of the community. Perhaps they did not mention him thereafter, because they did not think he was worth mentioning. Orobio is the only one in the Jewish community who took the trouble to read his work, and refute it.

For a long time scholars were unable to gain access to the records of the Synagogue. Rumors were floating that the congregation was hiding its records about the miscreant, Spinoza. However, when the records became available in 1961, it was found that what they were really hiding was the embarrassing fact that the records show that practically all the members of the 17th-century congregation became followers of the false Messiah, Sabbatai Zevi, in 1665-66! and many remained followers years later.

Another reason for the Synagogue's lack of interest in the Prado-Spinoza affair may be that the members were preoccupied with more pressing problems. There was a great need to resettle hundreds of Jewish colonists from Brazil who fled when the Portuguese reconquered the country from the Dutch. (Jonathan Israel, in his article in the Menasseh volume, shows the crucial importance of the resettlement issue in Sephardic affairs at the time of Menasseh's trip to

England to try to gain re-admission of the Jews. They had been expelled in 1290.) In 1656, as a new article by Kaplan in the *Studia Rosenthaliana* volume shows, there was a great influx of very poor Ashkenazi refugees into Amsterdam after the Russians captured Vilna. Lithuanian Jews fled across northern Germany, and many went as far as Amsterdam where they were grudgingly supported by the Synagogue. Their number became so great that major efforts had to be launched to resettle them in German cities. In the two weeks before the date of Spinoza's excommunication, records show that the congregation leaders were engaged in obtaining boats to take hundreds of Ashkenazi refugees from Amsterdam to places in Germany. The problems of the Brazilian colonists, most of whom were "people of the nation", Sephardim, related to the proud Portuguese of Amsterdam, and the problems of the poor Ashkenazim from Vilna needed immediate attention, financial and logistic. The fact that much money had to be paid for boats just *eight* days before Spinoza's excommunication, suggests that not too much attention may have been paid to what a brash 23-year-old had to say about the Bible. First things first. Probably the actual resettlement of the Lithuanian Jews was taking place at the very time that Prado's, Spinoza's and a third rebellious member's (Ribera), cases were being thrashed out.

There was also an important change in the rabbinate in 1655-56. The most famous teacher and scholar in the group, Menasseh ben Israel, went to England to negotiate with Oliver Cromwell for the re-admission of the Jews. His trip was made very much to the dismay of his co-religionists in Holland, who feared he would stir up English commercial antagonism, and Dutch suspicions of his motives.

Menasseh, the most cosmopolitan intellectual in the community, was replaced by the mystic, Isaac Aboab, who had been a part of the community earlier, and had then become the first rabbi in the New World in Brazil. Aboab and the merchant Abraham Pereyra set up a yeshiva in late 1655.

Further, evidence of Spinoza's greatly reduced financial contributions suggests that he became disenchanted with the community at just this time. The change of rabbis and the new atmosphere may have been factors in Spinoza's attitude, as well as contact with the heretical ideas of La Peyrère and the views of various radical Protestant thinkers. An additional element that has not been previously recognized is that in the mid-1650s, a very wealthy individual joined the Synagogue and became a very important official.

In 1989, there was a fascinating exhibit at the Jewish Historical Museum in Amsterdam, about the Lopes Suasso family and William

of Orange who became king of England in 1688. His voyage to England was financed by them. The catalogue of this exhibit has important essays by Daniel Swetschinski and Loeki Schonduve. From this material one sees that Baron Don Antonio (Isaac Israel) Lopes Suasso was the secretary-treasurer of the Synagogue at the very moment of the excommunication. Born and educated in Bordeaux, brother of an important Catholic professor of theology, he became a merchant-adventurer, travelling often to Iberia. He was a member of the Catholic Church in Antwerp. There is no indication that he was secretly Judaizing. In 1653, he married a member of the very rich De Pinto family, and moved to Amsterdam, which was replacing Antwerp as the center of the trade with Spain and Portugal and their colonies. There, Lopes Suasso, then 39 years old, for the first time in his life became a public Jew, probably for business reasons. (A Portuguese Catholic could not function in Holland.) He joined the Synagogue in 1654 or 1655, paying the largest contribution of any member. In spite of the requirement that one had to be a member for three years before becoming a *parnas*, Baron Lopes Suasso was the secretary-treasurer from Jewish New Year 1655 to the same date in 1656, the period in which Spinoza's rebellion and excommunication took place. On the very page where Spinoza's excommunication was entered in the records, Lopes Suasso's signature appears just above the *Herem*, the decree of excommunication.

The Spinoza literature makes it appear that it was the rabbis, especially Mortera, who were out to get Spinoza, because of his independent thinking. But it was the *parnassim* who expelled him. Would their new leader, Lopes Suasso, have cared about what Spinoza or Prado or Ribera thought? He functioned socially and economically in the Synagogue as a big shot, but he took no known part in its intellectual or theological activities. In 1671, he walked out over a business matter, and did not return. He was not a donor to the building of the Great Synagogue, and he was not a member of the Spanish literary societies of the highly cultured members.

It is unlikely that Lopes Suasso was a rigid orthodox type. He had only recently become a Jew, and probably adopted a Judaism made simple. His religion, Swetschinski suggests, was probably 90% ancestor worship, and 10% Jehovah worship. His money, no doubt, helped with the problems of settling the Brazilian colonists, and resettling the Lithuanian Jewish refugees outside of Amsterdam. He gave generous contributions.

Would he have cared what Spinoza or Prado believed? Probably not. I suggest a radical, perhaps, heretical thesis concerning his role

in the affair, namely, that he and his business friends did not care about ideological matters, but they did want and need the Synagogue world as a business club, and center of family-community activities. They were willing to put lots of money into it. And they did not need raucous rebels or poor Ashkenazim causing disturbances. So, maybe the excommunication was a quick way of getting rid of one nuisance element. The formula for the excommunication, obtained from Venice, was already in the files. They just had to apply it to the current nudnicks.

Years ago the philosopher, Lewis Feuer, interpreted Spinoza's excommunication in terms of economic factors. He judged the ideology of the participants in the excommunication in terms of where they stood later on, in the Sabbatai Zevi movement, and in the affairs of the Dutch Republic. My suggestion is that in 1655-56, the fathers of the Synagogue were busy establishing their fortunes, busy dealing with the pressing affairs of Jewish refugees, and were minimalists about Jewish observance and practice, and uninterested in Jewish ideology. Prado and Spinoza turn up with great news, that some of what has been accepted by Jews is false or dubious. In the situation then, who would care? Perhaps rabbis Mortera and Aboab, and would see the claims being made as heretical. The leading congregants wanted peace in the Synagogue. We know they tried to buy Prado off, even offering to pay his carfare to some far away land (America?), and Spinoza said they tried to bribe him to be discreet. According to Colerus he was offered a large pension if he would remain in the community and would turn up once or twice a year in the Synagogue and not make a fuss. They tried to get the rebels to quiet down, at least superficially. This indicates decorum was more important than substance or ideology. If they could not get that, they would be happy to have the "heretics" go some place else, and practice their heresies outside of the great business club, the Amsterdam Synagogue.

If the Synagogue leaders did not care about Spinoza's views, did Spinoza really care about theirs? Some factors suggest that the answer is "No." Spinoza was not at his own excommunication. (A copy of the *herem* was brought to him, according to Colerus.) Spinoza is unique among the more than 280 persons excommunicated from the Amsterdam Synagogue in the 17th century. He is the only one we know of who made *no* effort to have the ban revoked, or to rejoin the group. Da Costa spent years getting readmitted, and supposedly killed himself when he was expelled again. Prado spent about two years trying to head off excommunication. He made a grovelling apology at the same time that Spinoza was expelled. As far as we

know, Spinoza quietly and quickly left and started a new life among the non-denominational Christians even before the official excommunication. In the comments we are told by Colerus he made to his last landlord, Spinoza did not mention the excommunication. He gave as his reason for leaving the Jewish community that somebody tried to knife him outside the Synagogue. (He kept the coat with the knife hole for the rest of his life.) In his comments about Jews and Judaism in the *Tractatus* and in his letters, there is no expression of sadness that he had been cut off from them. (And he actually had at least one Jewish friend later on, the libertine Dr. Henri Morelli.) The ease with which he passed into the world of radical Christian Millenarians suggests that he had prepared the way beforehand, and was already operating in that world when he was thrown out. He did not become homeless, but was immediately taken in by the Collegiants and the Quakers. The Millenarian, Peter Serrarius, took care of his mail and introduced him to interesting people outside of the world of the Synagogue. Spinoza probably realized he was lucky to have been excommunicated. If he had managed to stay within the group, he would be as famous as Isaac Orobio de Castro who had to wait until the 1970s to be discovered by a graduate student [Yosef Kaplan] and thereby brought to the attention of the learned world three centuries too late.

It is generally assumed that Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* is his answer to Judaism and to the rabbis who had condemned him. But is it just that? The excellent new English translation by Shirley, the first in a century, has a fine introduction by Brad Gregory setting Spinoza partly in the Christian Millenarian context of the time. I think a reconsideration of some of the major themes of the *Tractatus* in terms of the issues in the Christian Millenarian world gives a somewhat different interpretation. Spinoza spent a lot of time analyzing the Hebrew theocracy and the Election of the Hebrews to show that this was meaningful in ancient Jewish history but had no relevance in his own time. Who was trying to reestablish the Hebrew theocracy in the mid-17th century, and who was claiming to be the Elect Nation? Not the Amsterdam Jewish community, who saw themselves as lucky residents in The Netherlands, able to engage in world commerce.

A 17th-century book, *The Hebrew Republic*, by a Leiden professor, Peter Cuneaus, examined various features of ancient Hebrew theocratic government *because* many learned *Christian* theologians saw the independent Dutch republic as the New Israel, or wanted to make the Dutch Republic into a modern theocracy patterned on the ancient one. Many Puritan theologians saw the republic in England as

a nation Holy and Elect, or were trying to make it so. The clear and present danger of the time was not the attempt by Jews to reestablish their ancient kingdom, but the attempt by Christian Millenarians to use the ancient scenario as a political programme for the day. Spinoza's separation of what happened three thousand years ago from what is meaningful for his contemporaries, may well have been directed at the enthusiastic Millenarians, creating mayhem by trying to establish God's Kingdom on Earth, more than against his Jewish contemporaries who had no political agenda. In attacking any supernatural basis for knowledge or action, Spinoza was effectively challenging the zealous Christian view of what was going on.

Jews who have been horrified by Spinoza's views about the status of the Bible and about the possibility of Providential action in human history, reacted much later than Christians. The *Tractatus* was read by Christian theologians and by freethinkers long before there was much Jewish reading of the book. The work was translated into French in 1678 and English in 1689, and was disseminated by radical thinkers. Answers at the time were written by Christian theologians, not by rabbis. (Orobio is the only Jew known to have written a response.) The impact of the *Tractatus* was on the general European Enlightenment long before it affected Jewish thought late in the 18th century. Maybe what happened is what the author intended, namely that Christians would read his book, and see that the supposed basis of their Millenarianism withers away when examined in the light of reason. Insofar as Christian Millenarianism is based on aspects of the traditional Jewish world view, criticizing one involves criticizing the other.

If the above discussion has sufficiently separated Spinoza and his accomplishments from the Jewish world of the time, is his philosophy the outcome of the development of the Marrano intellectual world? Spinoza was not himself a Marrano, but was the child of Marrano parents. He was of the first generation of free Jews born in Amsterdam, Jews who did not have to hide their views. He was, however, raised in a world whose heroes were Marranos. Yovel claims Spinoza was a special kind of Marrano—a marrano of reason. His book, *Spinoza and other Heretics*, has attracted a lot of attention in its Hebrew original. "No.1 bestseller in Israel" his publisher proclaims, no doubt in part because it places Spinoza in the center of current controversies in Israel. The book is a *tour de force*, putting together the results of recent studies about the Amsterdam intellectual world, recent studies by Hispanists of the Marrano elements in Spanish classical literature, and a sophisticated, though debatable, interpretation of

Spinoza's text seeing him as a purely naturalistic thinker. (A second volume compares Spinoza with Kant, Hegel, Heine, Marx, Nietzsche and Freud.) The first two ingredients are based on reading of other scholars, rather than any first hand original research. Gobs of material, some cited, and some just taken over as the author's own, are derived from Révah, Kaplan, Steven Gilman, myself, and others. Sometimes, because the author used secondary rather than primary sources, he arrives at strange misunderstandings of the original data. Someone has said about the book that what is borrowed is good, what is original is questionable. As an example, he overdoes my own hypothesis about the influence of La Peyrère on Spinoza, assuming that they were personal friends, who conversed in Menasseh's print shop, and then became adversaries. There is no evidence that they ever met, or that Spinoza saw himself at any point as an opponent of La Peyrère.

Yovel puts his interpretation of Spinoza in the context of the Marrano experience, and Marrano points of view. In this he follows the tradition started by Gebhardt and developed further by Révah, Popkin and others. To indicate the special character of Spinoza's outlook, the Spanish classic, *La Celestina* is contrasted with Spinoza's efforts, (something I suggested doing over fifteen years ago). *La Celestina* was written at the end of the 15th century. It was discovered in the mid-20th century that its author, Ferdinand de Rojas, was a New Christian, from a family that suffered much persecution. Gilman began the interpreting of the work in terms of the author's situation. Gilman, followed by other Spanish scholars, portrayed the *La Celestina* as a disguised statement of the plight of the *conversos*, and an advocacy of a Marrano's disillusioned interpretation of the nature of the world.

Yovel, builds on Gilman and more recent commentators, and makes *La Celestina* the great statement of a pagan denial of a Judeo-Christian world. (The original Spanish text is hardly mentioned.) This grandiose reading, offered with sweeping unsupported claims (which Yovel says he will justify in a future study of the play) seems to make too much of what is essentially a comic farce. It is like the great philosophic interpretations made out of Shakespeare's plays. There is nothing known about the authors, Rojas or Shakespeare, that justifies reading each line as a statement of a theory about the world.

Since Americo Castro wrote his famous *Structure of Spanish History*, a leading way of interpreting Spanish literature of the Golden Age has been in terms of the suppression of the Spanish Jews and Moors. It is to be expected that the meaningful literature of the time

would reflect the actual situation, and comment upon it. In view of the danger of stating opposition to Inquisitional policy, a critical author's message would have to be oblique and cryptic. Discovering the message in each case is a delicate and difficult matter, and requires a lot more than *obiter dicta* by a non-specialist.

Yovel gives the impression that Rojas stated *the* Marrano point of view. The first hand researches of Kaplan and others indicate that there was a wide variety of Marrano points of view, and that outlooks changed over time. How the world looked to those being suppressed right after the expulsion of the unconverted Jews in 1492, and how it looked a century later, should be different. How it looked to ex-Marranos breathing the free air of The Netherlands was probably something else.

Each case has to be examined on its own merits, and in its own context. At any time, from the forced conversions in 1391, through the exile in 1492, the ups and downs of suppression during the 16th century, people probably had quite differing views. Some people probably moved from being sceptical about Inquisitional Christianity to scepticism about Christianity itself, and perhaps even scepticism about religion in general. Others probably found solace and sustenance in some kind of internal mysticism. Some, as Kaplan points out, developed a spiritualized Judaism: "Since, as crypto-Jews, they had been precluded from sharing a mode of life guided by Jewish Law, many of them came to feel that an interior, emotionally-felt identity with the Jewish heritage was more important than the actual implementation of the commandments" (p. 380) (an outlook that foreshadows modern reformed Judaism).

Further, various case studies indicate that those who were able to function had mastered leading a double life, conformity on the outside, and commitment to private beliefs on the inside. They became experts at survival in a very treacherous world. How each survived differed from person to person and from time to time. Some survived by internalizing all signs of belief, some by shedding all dangerous beliefs. Some survived by finding niches in the social and economic world in which they could function without their private worlds being discovered or endangered.

A very large number of people over time were absorbed into the prevailing oppressive culture. As Kaplan points out, the wonder is not that so many became ordinary Christians, but rather that so many, though a much smaller number, became functioning members of Jewish communities. Yet the heroism involved in living a Marrano life in such a hostile world has to be placed beside the fact that those

who lived such a life chose to stay in the hostile situation. The heroes who emerged later on in Amsterdam or Livorno or Hamburg were most reluctant to part from Iberia or the New Christian communities in France. Only when it became genuinely life-threatening for them, did they go elsewhere, and become functioning Jews.

One has to appreciate the special situation and character of the ex-Marranos of Amsterdam. They built an amazing Spanish Jewish world, and helped to launch the modern economic outlook. They employed their Catholic intellectual background to understand and defend their Judaism. This resulted in a special kind of philosophical and theological literature unique in Jewish history, including some very striking critical analyses of Christianity. Kaplan surveys this material, which at the moment is still mainly in manuscript form in Amsterdam, Jerusalem and elsewhere. The writings of Orobio de Castro are probably the most interesting for the intellectual history of the period. The anti-Christian polemics of Orobio, Mortera and others played a significant role in the Enlightenment in providing English deists and *philosophes* with critical ammunition.

Spinoza, the son of Marranos, was born and raised in Amsterdam where it was no longer necessary to adopt Marrano intellectual habits. Yovel claims that Spinoza retained enough of the Marrano view, and applied it to become "a Marrano of reason". He was the first secular philosopher, believing in no form of Judaism or Christianity, but in the ability of reason to explain everything in naturalistic terms. This characterization of Spinoza's thought is not new. Wolfson had said Spinoza was the first modern philosopher who needed no axiom from revelatory or supernatural material to explain the world. Pierre Bayle, three centuries ago, said he was the first to reduce atheism to a system.

Yovel also contends that Spinoza was the first secular Jew. This means Spinoza was both a complete secularist and a Jew, in some meaningful sense. The thesis is based on a few strands of evidence. Spinoza had said that anti-semitism is what kept Judaism alive. Some anti-semites stressed that Spinoza was a Jew. Hence, Q. E. D., he remained a Jew because of anti-semitism, while being a purely secular person. To assess whether this could be the case, I think we would have to know much more about what Spinoza thought of himself and of his ancestry, not just how he thought Jews in general reacted to anti-semitism. (Others, like his friend Dr. Morelli, might have been secular Jews in the fullest sense.)

Whatever the case, some great shift occurred between 1650-1700 in theories about God and the world, and about the relationship of

the Bible to human history and action. Spinoza, no matter how he saw himself, became the theoretician for the new "enlightened" age of secularism.

Yovel says that Spinoza had to disguise his real thoughts in Marrano-like fashion, lest he appear too shocking, and had to express himself cryptically. If this were the case, he hardly succeeded since his contemporaries saw the originality and the danger of his thought for what it was. They were not fooled by his use of theological terms and pious religious phrases. In fact we are told by people who talked to Spinoza that in private he was more shocking than in his writings. The French libertines and Dr. Morelli who knew him got the message without any obfuscation, and did not have to decode what he said.

Leo Strauss taught us to read between the lines, because persecution affects the art of writing. People have to be careful in expressing their honest thoughts and convictions. All of us, not just Marranos in Iberia, or many of the writers in Stalinist Russia, learn only too quickly that we have to do what is acceptable, and must get our points across within these limits. It is in this sense that the Marrano experience has important meaning for us today, even in the "free" atmosphere in the United States. And the types of state control possible in the late 20th century engender new kinds of double living and cryptic expression.

People in totalitarian societies constantly have the problem of hiding their real views, and expressing them through hints and clues. People not part of the social majority in our society also have problems, though not, perhaps, as severe in their consequences. Consider the plight of gays expressing themselves, even today, in mainstream America. They risk social and economic ostracism. They risk the collapse of a carefully constructed way of functioning outwardly in our society. Consider the possibility of blacks expressing their outrage outside the black community. The attitude of the white majority towards some of the black racial views indicates that a sympathetic black, who wants to function in mainstream America, had best be a Marrano, hiding real views and professing accepted and acceptable ones. Consider the possibility of Jews, especially during the Christmas season, expressing their personal evaluation of Christianity. Or bio's anti-Christian sentiments, if uttered by someone now in public, would lead to social and possibly economic scorn and rejection.

So, Marrano activity is forced upon us all, if we are not completely homogenized members of the dominant culture. We learn, if we are to survive socially, when and where and how we can express our innermost thoughts (maybe only to ourselves). If we gain sufficient insight

and perspective, or chutzpah, we realize that as outsiders, as undigested minorities, we see the world differently from the majority, and we have different values. What we see, may be of greater significance not only to us, but to society in general, than the mainstream point of view. Hence the value of black and Jewish and gay literature in our society, to the general public. As outsiders we see things insiders would never notice. We see the effect of the majority insiders squashing the outsiders, both on the victims and on the victimizers. In expressing our Marrano outlook, in a form acceptable to the majority, we can throw great light on the character of majority life, and in so doing help both ourselves and the society in general.

The Marrano experiences in Iberia, in Europe, in Amsterdam, helped shape the modern outlook. Whether people consciously saw the world apart from previous assumptions, or unconsciously did so, they became not just voices crying in the wilderness. They became spokespersons for a different world of uprooted people, partly cut off from their heritage. Spinoza no doubt grew out of this milieu. To appreciate him and his own contribution, one has to learn what one can about the world of the Amsterdam Jewish community. These recent studies are of inestimable importance in doing this. And, lest one get carried away by possible intellectual dramas and conflicts, one also has to appreciate how what was happening related to the press of immediate problems, like that of the sharp influx of refugees at the very moment when Spinoza and Prado were carrying on their early critical sorties against accepted religion.

X

NEWTON'S BIBLICAL THEOLOGY AND HIS THEOLOGICAL PHYSICS

In the vast literature about Newton, little is devoted to explaining his religious views, except as personal aberrations, infantile views, or premature signs of senility. In recent years R. S. Westfall, Frank Manuel, James Force and a few others have tried to give some more impressive explanations of why one of the world's greatest scientists should have spent so much time thinking and writing about religious matters.¹ In this paper I should like to turn the problem around and ask why did one of the greatest anti-Trinitarian theologians of the 17th century take time off religious matters to write works on natural science, like *Principia Mathematica*?

Newton wrote on religion and theology from his college days down to the end of his life. Almost half of the pages that he physically wrote, most still unpublished, deal with explicating the Bible, interpreting it, and developing a theory of Scriptural and natural revelation. To appreciate Newton's accomplishments in these areas he really has to be compared with the other great theologians of the 17th century, such as his teachers and associates, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth and Isaac Barrow. This paper will deal primarily with Newton's views, with some indications as to how he went beyond the others of his time.

Sir Isaac Newton's views on the Bible are an intriguing mixture of modern Bible scholarship, of the application of modern science to the Bible, and a conviction that in the proper reading of the revealed text, God's plan for human and world history can be found. Newton wrote a great deal about the Bible as an historical document, about the accuracy of the Bible, about the chronology of the Bible, and about the message of the Bible. He wrote on these matters from his student days at Cambridge until his death. For many years, including the central ones in his intellectual career, he was preparing manuscripts on

¹ Gale E. Christianson, *In the Presence of the Creator. Isaac Newton and his Times* (New York, 1984); James E. Force, *William Whiston, Honest Newtonian* (Cambridge, 1985); Frank E. Manuel, *Isaac Newton Historian* (Cambridge, Mass., 1963); and *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford, 1974); and Richard S. Westfall, *Never at Rest. A Biography of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1980).

these subjects for publication, and withheld them because his views were so heretical for his time.

Four items appeared posthumously: *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (1728), *Observations on Daniel and Revelation* (1732), an essay on the Cubit of the Hebrews (1737), and two letters to John Locke dealing with the Doctrine of the Trinity (1743).² Besides the published material a vast amount of still unpublished manuscripts exists in libraries from Jerusalem to Japan.³

When Newton died, a large box of papers on religion and theology was given by his family to the Royal Society, of which he had been the President. The Royal Society looked through the material and returned it, telling the family not to show it to anyone. Years later they showed it to their minister, and were given the same advice. In the early 19th century some of the material was used by David Brewster in his biography of Newton, and he again advised the owners not to show it to anyone. Late in the 19th century, Cambridge University sent some people to go through the papers, looking for mathematical or scientific treasures, and returned the rest, with the same admonition. The Earl of Portsmouth, Lord Lymington, became the owner in the early 20th century, and tried to give the papers to Cambridge University which refused them, and to the British Museum, which did likewise. The manuscripts were finally put up for auction at Sotheby's in 1936. The largest purchases were made by Lord Keynes and Prof. A. S. Yahuda, an eminent Arabist. Smaller units passed into libraries in Europe and America, and various pieces are still in private hands.⁴

The theological manuscripts in the Keynes collection, which was given to King's College, Cambridge, have been published in a slim volume.⁵ The largest collection, well over half of what was auctioned off, was bought by A. S. Yahuda, a wealthy Palestinian Jew, who took his degree in Arabic studies in Germany, became Royal Professor of Medieval Rabbinics in Spain, then Professor of Arabic in Germany, a lecturer in England in the 1930's, and a refugee scholar in America

² Isaac Newton, *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (London, 1728), and *Two Letters to Mr. LeClerc* (London, 1754).

³ No inventory of Newton's theological manuscripts has been published. Westfall, in *op.cit.*, gives a survey of where manuscripts are located. I have found others at the University of Kentucky, at the Seventh Day Adventist Seminary at Barien Springs, Michigan, and in private hands. There is a sales catalogue of Sotheby's for the manuscripts that were auctioned off in 1936.

⁴ On the history of Newton's manuscripts, see Westfall, *op.cit.*, pp. 875-877.

⁵ Isaac Newton, *Theological Manuscripts*, selected and edited with an introduction by H. McLachlan (Liverpool, 1950).

from 1940, until his death in 1951. Yahuda had an enormous collection of manuscripts, of which the Newton holdings were one of 1,500 collections.⁶ When he brought the collection to America, he tried to get his close friend, Albert Einstein, to aid him in placing the Newton manuscripts at Harvard, Yale or Princeton. Harvard refused them on the grounds that a war was going on, Yale on the grounds that they had no space, and Princeton on the grounds that the material was not scientific.⁷ Yahuda was forced to keep his Newton collection in his house in New Haven. As death neared, he debated what to do. A friend and disciple of his has told me that it was only on his death-bed that he willed all of his manuscripts to the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem. Yahuda had early on been a Zionist, but broke with the movement at the time of the Balfour Declaration in 1917. He became a leading opponent of the idea of a Jewish state, and refused to have anything to do with the state of Israel. However, on his death-bed, he was convinced to send his precious manuscripts to his homeland.⁸ After his death a law suit followed, when the family tried to break the will. The manuscripts only got sent to Jerusalem in 1969, and have been studied there by only a few scholars. So far only part of one of the Yahuda manuscripts has been published.⁹

Since Newton drafted his views over at least sixty years, and since most of the manuscripts have not been published, it is not yet possible to give a succinct statement of Newton's views on religious matters. Newton's views change, are reconsidered, amended over years. Early on Newton was close to being a Calvinist literalist. In one of the Yahuda manuscripts, 1.1 (which was partially published by Frank Manuel), Newton wrote. "To chose those interpretations which are most according to the literall meaning of the scriptures unles where the tenour and circumstances of the place plainly require an Allegory".¹⁰ A few pages later, after the text published by Manuel, Newton said that it "is ye wisdom of God that he hath framed ye

⁶ There is an inventory written by Yahuda at the Jewish National Library in Jerusalem. The Newton manuscripts are collection #1; #2 is a very large group of Napoleon items; #3 is the holograph manuscript of Einstein's *Physik und Realität*. Over 95% of the other items are in Near Eastern languages.

⁷ The correspondence is in Yahuda Ms. Var. 1, Box 42.

⁸ This information was acquired in private conversations with friends of Yahuda. He is still a very controversial figure in Israel. Shortly after his death his widow privately published a work of Yahuda's entitled, *Dr. Weizman's Errors on Trial*, an attack on what Chaim Weizman said about Yahuda in his work, *Trial and Error*.

⁹ This appears as an appendix to Frank Manuel, *Religion of Isaac Newton*, "Fragments from a Treatise on Revelation", pp. 107-23.

¹⁰ Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.1., fol. 12r; Manuel, *Religion of Newton*, p. 118.

Scriptures as to distinguish between ye good and ye bad, that they should be demonstrations to ye one & foolishness to the other".¹¹ This manuscript is dated by Westfall as written in 1671.¹² Later on, apparently through the influence of Richard Simon, or maybe Spinoza and/or John Locke, Newton developed a rather critical view about any existing texts of the Old or New Testaments. Newton had several works of Father Simon in his library.¹³ He could have learned of Spinoza's views from Simon's writings, or from Henry More's critique of Spinoza, or from the copy of Spinoza's *Tractatus* in Isaac Barrow's library, which Newton catalogued.¹⁴

In both the manuscripts (New College, Oxford Mss. II, fol. 192 and Yahuda Var. Ms. 1.7.1, 1.9 and 10B11v),¹⁵ and in the published version of the *Observations on Daniel and Revelation*, Newton offered a picture of how the text of the Old Testament got to its present state. He presented a theory of how the texts were composed, mixed up, and corrupted. Newton tried in some detail to describe how various Biblical documents got into their present confused state. He held that we have no texts that date before Talmudic times.¹⁶

On the historical side, using internal evidence, and the historical events in the Biblical texts, Newton worked out of a detailed account of how the books of the Old Testament were compiled. A version of this account appears in the first chapter of the published *Observations*.¹⁷ A much more detailed account of this appears in Yahuda Ms. 1.7:3, 9:2 and 10B. Newton did not claim Moses was the author of the Pentateuch. The history of God's people that is contained in it "hath been collected from several books" as was the history of the Creation. Newton named some of these lost books "the book of the generations of Adam" "the book of the wars of the Lord", etc. The books which have come down to us were written with the authority of Moses and Joshua. Samuel put them in their present form, inserting additional material as well in *Genesis*.¹⁸ Newton went on

¹¹ Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.1, fol. 19v.

¹² In the chronological order of Newton's theological writings prepared by R. S. Westfall, unpublished.

¹³ Cf. John Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge, 1978), p. 239.

¹⁴ See Manuel, *Religion of Newton*, pp. 84-85.

¹⁵ Newton manuscripts, New College Oxford II, fol. 192; Yahuda Var. Ms. 1.7, 1.9 and 1.10B, fol. 11v.

¹⁶ Newton, *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* (London, 1733), chap. I, pp. 1-15.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, loc. cit. A much more detailed account of this appears in Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.7.3, 1.9.2 and 1.10B.

¹⁸ Newton, *Observations*, pp. 4-5.

systematically constructing a theory about when each book was written. *Isaiah*, Newton said, was written at several different times, and collected together by the prophet.¹⁹ "The book of Daniel is a collection of papers written at several times". The last six chapters, Newton claimed were by Daniel himself, written at various times; the first six were written by others, some time after Daniel's death, and collected together, possibly by Ezra. The texts were partially destroyed by Antiochus Epiphanes, and so an effort at restoration was made by Judah Maccabeus.²⁰ The text of Yahuda Ms. Var. 7:3 and 10B indicate Newton thought some books were entirely lost, others jumbled together. Papers from *Samuel* got into *Nehemiah*, and other disorders occurred.²¹

It was only in the Roman captivity that, as the Jews tried to preserve their traditions by writing the Talmud, and to preserve their scriptures, they agreed upon an edition, and added in the vowel points, and counted the letters in each book: "by preserving only this Edition, the antientier various lections, except what can be discovered by means of the Septuagint version, are now lost, and such marginal notes, or other corruptions, as by errors of the transcribers, before this Edition was made, had crept into the text, are now scarce to be corrected".²²

Thus, Newton was quite avant-garde in his view about the Biblical text, and did not subscribe to the view of the Westminster Confession, or of later Fundamentalism, that God, in His Providence, had preserved the Word entire through all of the vicissitudes of human history.²³

With regard to the text of the New Testament, Newton was much more critical. He was concerned to argue for the primacy of the book of *Revelation*, and for deliberate corruption of the New Testament texts by wicked characters like Saint Athanasius. Because, as we shall see, the core of Scripture for Newton, were the two books, *Daniel* and *Revelation*, he wanted to ward off the challenge to the latter work by those who from early Christian times to the present have tried to see *Revelation* as a late work, not connected with Jesus's life

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

²¹ Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.7.3, and 1.10B, fol. 11v-12r.

²² Newton, *Observations*, pp. 11-12.

²³ *The Westminster Confession of Faith* (London, 1658), chap. 1, sec. viii, p. 6, states that the Old and New Testaments "being immediately inspired by God, and by his singular care and Providence kept pure in all Ages, are therefore Authentic".

on earth. Newton marshalled much evidence from early Christians writers to support his contention that *Revelation* was written before the destruction of the Temple, and the expulsion of the Jews from Jerusalem. Its author, John the Evangelist, received the revelation that he recorded from Jews, and wrote it in a style that contains more Hebraisms than the Gospel of John (which Newton thought was written by the same person). Therefore, Newton argued, *Revelation* was written when John "was newly come out of Judea, where he had been used to the Syriac tongue". John wrote his gospel later when he had spent much time with Greeks, and had dropped his Hebraisms.²⁴

Further, Newton claimed, *Revelation* is alluded to in the epistles of Peter and in Paul's letter to the Hebrews, so it must precede them. All of this, for Newton, established *Revelation* as the earliest written work in the New Testament, written by a Hebrew or Aramaic speaking disciple of Jesus before the Jews were driven out of Judea.²⁵

Newton felt that there was no need to argue about the truth of the book of *Revelation*, or that it was the statement of the very truth that Daniel was commanded to shut up and seal. He did argue that the text of the Gospel according to John and of *Timothy* was corrupt, and was deliberately corrupted in the parts dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity.²⁶ Newton examined as many manuscripts and manuscript readings as he could of the crucial texts. In one of the Jerusalem manuscripts, Yahuda Var.1:4, he listed pages and pages and pages of variant readings.²⁷ Although he made no effort to decide which manuscript was accurate, Newton, in two letters he sent to John Locke in 1690, put together a most forceful case that the doctrine of the Trinity was not in the original or early texts, and was not the view of the early Christians. In three different unpublished manuscripts, one in the Clark Library of UCLA, another at Cambridge, and a third in Jerusalem, Newton set forth his indictment against Saint Athanasius.²⁹ In the longest unpublished manuscript, at the Bodmer Library in Geneva, Newton presented his grandiose

²⁴ Newton, *Observations*, p. 238.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 239.

²⁶ See Newton's letter to Locke, Nov. 4, 1690 (full reference given in note 28), and Westfall, *op.cit.*, pp. 312-13, for further references.

²⁷ Yahuda Ms. Var. 14.

The first time two of these letters were published was in London in 1754. The full texts, plus a third letter are printed in *The Correspondence of Isaac Newton*, edited by H. W. Turnbull (Cambridge, 1961), Vol. III, pp. 83-146.

²⁹ William Andrews Clark Library Ms. Newton *Paradoxical Questions concerning ye morals and actions of Athanasius and his followers*; Keynes Ms. 10, King's College Cambridge, *Paradoxical Questions*. See also Yahuda Ms. 1.14.

theory of how the Church became corrupt, how it falsified the true doctrine of Christianity, and in part, how it accomplished this by tinkering with the texts of the New Testament.³⁰

Although it is evident that Newton was outraged by the conspiracy he had uncovered in the grand mystery of the iniquity of the early church (that he believed was still going on in his own day), he was also extremely anxious not to reveal that he himself was an Arian, and denied the doctrine of the Trinity. He had originally written the letters to Locke for publication. They are quite impressive as examples of critical Bible scholarship of the time.³¹ The letters were to be published by the Dutch liberal Remonstrant theologian, Jean le Clerc. Newton apparently panicked when he realized the letters, though anonymous, would be recognized as his, and then he would be revealed as an anti-Trinitarian, and could not hold any state office. Newton got Le Clerc to halt the publication,³² and two of the letters were only published in 1743, after Le Clerc died. A third letter to Locke drawing out the full anti-Trinitarian consequences of his researches has only been published for the first time in 1961.³²

So, with regard to the Scriptural text that has come down to us, Newton accepted the Hebrew text as corrupt, but usable. The Greek New Testament text he had felt had to be rescued from the Trinitarians, and to restored to the original view, that Jesus was the lamb of God, but was not con-substantial or co-eternal with God. Because Newton, unlike Spinoza, was convinced that the essential message of the Bible survived in the prophetic texts in *Daniel* and *Revelation*, he did not become a sceptic about religious knowledge. He felt that a good deal of the Old Testament could be studied as an early historical writing, and evaluated in terms of our knowledge of other historical data, as to its accuracy and import.³³

The work that was published as *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended* (1728) shows Newton using newly discovered scientific knowledge to contend that the Bible is historically accurate, is the oldest historical record that we possess, and is more accurate than Greek, Phoenician, Babylonian or Egyptian records. Newton argued that the oldest chronologists, Manetho and Erastostenes, were in contradiction both with Scripture and with the new astronomy. Since we do not possess records older than the Bible, and there are reasons to

³⁰ Martin Bodmer Library, Geneva, Newton Ms. on the Mystery of the Grand Iniquity of the Church.

³¹ On this, see Westfall, *Never at Rest*, pp. 390-391.

³² See note 28.

³³ Cf. Manuel, *Isaac Newton, Historian*, chaps. VI and IX.

questions the claims of antiquity in some of the early pagan writers, Newton felt that one should start where one can have reasonable confidence in the data.³⁴ For him this involved accepting the historical chronologies in the Bible up to the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, as well as accepting the astronomical records mentioned by Thucydides and Ptolemy. From the description of the stars in the constellations in the Zodiac given in the accounts about the mission of Jason and the Argonauts, and about the Trojan War, one can now figure out when these events took place. The procession of various stars in these constellations is measurable and follows a uniform law. From present observations one can figure out backwards where these stars were previously, and date when the stars were in the positions described in early Greek history.³⁵

The dramatic result of using this astronomical method to figure out the date of previous events was, for Newton, that it showed that the early events described in the Old Testament took place *before* the early events in Greek history. Jason's voyage took place, according to Newton, in 937 B.C. The earliest known events in Egyptian history also postdated Biblical events. Hence, our earliest reliable knowledge of human history comes from the Bible. The ancient Israelites were the first civilization and had the first monarchy. All other cultures and kingdoms are derivative from the ancient Hebrew one.³⁶

The point in Newton's elaborate astronomical argument, and his debunking of pagan chronological and historical claims was to point up the accuracy of the Bible as history, and the presumption that the message that got conveyed in the Bible is of the greatest importance to mankind. If the Bible can be accepted as historically accurate, then God presented His Message from the beginning through the Hebrews, and through their history, and through the prophetic insights given to them.³⁷

Before turning to this side of Newton's interpretation of the Bible, it should be mentioned that the scholar who collected most of Newton's religious writings that are now in Jerusalem, A. S. Yahuda, a renowned Arabist, wrote a book called *The Accuracy of the Bible a*

³⁴ Newton, "A Short Chronicle of the First Memory of Things in Europe", in *The Chronology of Ancient Kingdoms Amended*, pp. 1-42; and Manuel, *Newton, Historian*, pp. 85-88.

³⁵ Newton, *Chronology*, chap. I and p. 358; and Manuel, *Newton, Historian*, chaps. IV-VI.

³⁶ Newton, "A Short Chronicle", pp. 25-26; and Manuel, *Newton, Historian*, pp. 85-88.

³⁷ Manuel, *Newton, Historian*, chap. VI.

few years before he acquired the Newton manuscripts. Yahuda tried to show that the story of the Exodus had to be written by an eyewitness because so many Egyptian terms appear in the account. Israelites of subsequent generations would no longer have known Egyptian. Q. E. D.³⁸ I have been told by a student and friend of Yahuda's that Albert Einstein was present when Yahuda first stated his theory in a lecture, and that Einstein wept with joy when he realized that one might be able to prove that the events in the Bible were accurately and factually described.³⁹ Unfortunately Egyptologists of the time sharply challenged Yahuda's contention, and it was quickly set aside by the scholarly world.⁴⁰

It seems likely that Yahuda collected Newton's manuscripts to see if Newton had more evidence on "the accuracy of the Bible." Yahuda's notes on the manuscripts, and his own unfinished essay on Newton's religious views, showed that Yahuda, a 20th-century scholar, trained in the German world of Higher Criticism and in the secular methods of scholarship, felt a strong affinity with Newton in the attempt to establish some meaningful sense in which it could be said that the Bible is accurate.⁴¹

For Newton the accuracy claim reinforces the contention that God has revealed himself in Jewish history. The historical Biblical materials help explain the origin of mankind, of human institutions and human cultural abilities, such as being able to write. And Newton left a lot of manuscripts on the development of political societies from the Israelite one onward.⁴² He was also convinced that in the units God gave the Hebrews to measure (the sacred cubit of the Hebrews) and in the plans for Solomon's Temple, very important revealed information could be discovered.⁴³ But the most important thing to be discovered in the Biblical records is that God has laid down the plan of human history, as well as the plan of natural history. The latter

³⁸ A. S. Yahuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible* (New York, 1935).

³⁹ From a private conversation in 1985.

⁴⁰ Yahuda was challenged by the Egyptologist, Wilhelm Spiegelberg.

⁴¹ Yahuda's essay is with his Newton manuscripts in Yahuda Ms. Var. 1, Box 43.

⁴² For example, see Keynes Ms 146, New College Ms. 361.1, and Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.7.

⁴³ Newton's essay, "A Dissertation upon the Sacred *Cubit* of the Jews and the *Cubits* of the several Nations" was published in John Greaves, *Miscellaneous Works* (London, 1737), Vol. II, pp. 405-33. Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.2.4, 1.2.5, 1.13.2 and 1.28.5 are on The Temple and the sacred cubit. The most complete statement by Newton on the structure of Solomon's Temple (with illustrations) is in Babson College Ms. 434, "Prolegomena ad Lexici Prophetici partem secundam, in quibus agitur De forma Sanctuarii Judaici".

is to be studied primarily in the Book of Nature, through scientific researches. The former is to be studied in the central prophetic statement about the course of human history, the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. Textual problems aside, these two works are continuous and united, and present, in deliberately difficult manner, what will happen to mankind up to the apocalyptic end of human history.

To those who are sceptical about the core of God's message being in *Daniel* and *Revelation*, Newton offered three answers. One, why would God have provided us with so many clues in the form of the cryptic symbols in these books, if we were not supposed to try to figure them out? Second, we are told in *Daniel* that the wise will understand and the wicked will not. If one sees no message, that shows one's moral deficiencies, but is no comment on the message. Third, and most important, the prophetic character of the message is confirmed by carefully examining human history from the time of the writing of *Daniel* onward, and discovering how much of what has happened is an exact fulfillment of the prophecies set forth in *Daniel* and *Revelation*.⁴⁴

The third answer then lays down the project Newton dealt with all of his adult life, writing the definitive explanation of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. He sided with several great Bible scholars. He was very influenced by Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, but apparently came to a basic disagreement with him about interpreting the symbol of the seven churches at the beginning of the text of *Revelation*. We know that Newton delayed publishing his scientific work because he was too engrossed in working with More on a commentary on *Revelation*. A letter of 1680 of More's indicates that they had a serious falling out.⁴⁵ In the Newton manuscripts More is occasionally directly criticized, but is usually obliquely attacked.⁴⁶ Newton presented himself as the true heir of More's teacher, Joseph Mede, the author of *Clavis Apocalyptica* (1627).⁴⁷ This work offered a synchronic way of correlating predicted events in *Daniel* and *Revelation* and introduced non-Biblical sources, like the medieval Arabic writer, Achmed, for understanding what ancient Israel could have been like, what they and other ancient Middle Eastern peoples could have believed in, etc.

⁴⁴ Newton, *Observations*, pp. 13-15 and 249-250; and Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.1. fols 1r and 19-20.

⁴⁵ Cf. letter of Henry More to Dr. John Sharp, Aug. 16, 1680, printed in Marjorie Hope Nicolson, *Conway Letters* (New Haven, 1930), pp. 478-479.

⁴⁶ See for example Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.9.22, sec. ix, fol. 87 and 10B. See also Manuel, *Religion of Newton*, pp. 90-91 and 100.

⁴⁷ See Newton, *Observations*, p. 278, and Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.1. fols. 84 and 88.

Mede also was very concerned to show how post-Biblical history conformed to deciphered predictions in *Daniel* and *Revelation*.⁴⁸ Newton over at least fifty years sought to figure out workable and reasonable rules for interpreting prophecies, as distinguished from fanciful ones used by so many of his predecessors and contemporaries. Newton studied the history of the late Roman Empire, the European Middle Ages, the rise of Islam in the Middle East, and sought to identify what happened with what was predicted.

Newton unlike too many interpreters of *Daniel* and *Revelation*, was not trying to deduce exactly when the world would come to an end, exactly when Jesus would return, and exactly when the Jews would return to Palestine and rebuild Jerusalem. His energies went into post-facto analysis of historical events, to show that, after they occurred, the wise can see that they are the very events predicted in passages in the prophetic works. Insofar as they are the predicted events, this shows that history is Providential history. God has laid out the whole sequence, and we, post-facto, can realize this. In realizing it, we then should be in awe of God's dominion over our history as well as over nature.⁴⁹ (Something like this had been claimed by Nostradamus, whom Newton rarely mentioned in the manuscripts.) Nostradamus said that God had given him the power to see the future. He saw it. If he told people, they would be unable to understand it. He then wrote out what would happen in a such a disguised way that people would only see that he had forecast given historical events *after* they happened. In recognizing this, people would realize that everything that happens is part of God's Providence.⁵⁰ Newton's post-facto method of analysis became important in the later history of prophetic interpretation that became part of the fundamentalist movement.⁵¹ Before exploring what is involved here, one crucial element of Newton's prophetic interpretation needs to be mentioned. The realization that actual history is the fulfillment of predictions in the Bible involves realizing that Jewish history is the core of world history. The march from ancient Israel to Babylonia, Persia, Greece,

⁴⁸ On Mede, see Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979), chap. VII; and R. H. Popkin, "The Third Force in Seventeenth Century Thought: Scepticism, Science and Millenarianism", this volume, pp. 90-119.

⁴⁹ Newton, *Observations*, pp. 252-53.

⁵⁰ See Michel de Nostradamus, "Préface de M. Nostradamus à ses Prophéties. Ad Caesarem Nostradamus filium", in E. Leoni, *Nostradamus, Life and Literature* (New York, 1965), pp. 120-31.

⁵¹ On this see R. H. Popkin, "Newton and the Rise of Fundamentalism", forthcoming.

Syria, Rome and onwards is the development of God's relations to the Jews, and will culminate in the return of Jesus, and he and "the mortal Jews" establishing dominion over the world from Jerusalem. The Bible, especially *Daniel* and *Revelation*, project what will happen to the Jews. The study of prophetic fulfillment shows that the predicted has happened in exact detail over and over again. Hence, in studying the Scriptural text, one is also studying what remains to be fulfilled. Newton got his erstwhile disciple, William Whiston, to spell out in his Boyle lectures on the accomplishment of Scripture prophecies, in which a huge induction was offered from the vast number of Biblical prophecies already fulfilled, to the reasonable scientific expectation that the rest, including the end of the natural world, would be fulfilled in the not too distant future.⁵²

Newton's aversion to futuristic predictions is understandable in a century where all sorts of exact predictions by English Millenarians, Dutch Chiliasts, the great Jan Amos Comenius, the Sabbatian Jews, had not turned out to be true. The Millennium did not begin in 1656, 1666 or other predicted years of great expectation.⁵³

Newton, in explicating *Daniel* and *Revelation* offered a theory of progressive development in understanding the prophecies. As we approach the end of this, "Then, saith Daniel, many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased". But, "'Tis therefore part of this Prophecy [*Daniel* 10:21, 12:4, 9] that it should not be understood before the last age of the world, and therefore it makes for the credit of the Prophecy, that it is not yet understood".⁵⁴ The great success in interpreting *Daniel* and *Revelation* by Mede and his followers, indicates we may be approaching the time of the end.

At this point, Newton set forth his post-facto theory of interpreting prophecy. "The folly of Interpreters has been to foretell times and things by this Prophecy, as if God designed to make them Prophets. By this rashness they not only exposed themselves, but brought Prophecy also into contempt". God did not make post-Biblical interpreters into prophets (though Newton sometimes speaks as if he were one, the only one.) God set forth the prophecies not so that curious people could know the future. God's purpose was that people would realize after the prophecies were fulfilled "they might be interpreted by the event, and his own Providence, not the Inter-

⁵² William Whiston, *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecy* (London, 1708).

⁵³ Newton was obviously interested in some of these prophecies. See for example, Yahuda Ms. Var. 1.10B, fol. 14, where Newton referred to the prophecies of Cotterus, Christina and Drabnicus, published by Comenius.

⁵⁴ Newton, *Observations*, pp. 250-51.

preters, be then manifested thereby to the world. For the occurrence of things predicted many ages before will then be a convincing argument that the world is governed by Providence".⁵⁵ Until Jesus's return and the actual Apocalypse, and the setting up of the Kingdom of Righteousness, we will not be able to understand all of the prophecies. But when it all does occur, we will know the true religion. Until then we should recognize that we can only understand the prophecies imperfectly, while realizing those prophecies that have been fulfilled show us evidence of God's Providence. The interpreters of prophecy in modern times have made so much progress, presumably from Mede to Newton, that, as Newton remarked, "I seem to gather that God is about opening these mysteries".⁵⁶ So, the world predicted in the Bible is near fruition.

Newton's conception of the Bible is that it is a historical document and a cryptogram telling us of God's historical plan. The historical document is open to examination, as are other documents. Critical investigation helps us realize the defects in the documents, and enables us to assess them. Using historical standards, plus modern scientific information about the movements of the stars in time, we can determine that the Bible is the oldest historical documents we possess, and, except for parts of the New Testament, has been better preserved than other ancient documents. Further, from what we now know, the Bible is the most accurate account we have of human history.

But, for Newton, the Bible is much more than a source of historical data. It is the way God has communicated to us in words, just as Nature is God's communication in things. The natural and the verbal messages require tremendous effort, insight, and pious attention to understand. Science and the study of Biblical prophecy go together as ways of comprehending God's message. The progress in science and the progress in understanding *Daniel* and *Revelation* indicate that God is opening the seals, letting us know the nature and destiny of man. Newton, as decoder of Nature and Scripture, may be the closest to a genuine prophet that remains.

Newton's view of the Bible, though mainly buried in still unpublished manuscripts, became sufficiently known through the items published in the 18th century. Most of the early fundamentalist interpreters, who saw the American and French Revolutions as fulfillments of prophecies in *Daniel* and *Revelation*, used Newton as a source,⁵⁷

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 251-52.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 252-53.

⁵⁷ Popkin, "Newton and the Rise of Fundamentalism", forthcoming.

and as theorist explaining why exact predictions often failed.⁵⁸ Newton's post-facto method of interpretation allowed for reconsideration and restudying of prophecies when prediction failed. The last printing of Newton's *Observations upon the Prophecies of Daniel and the Apocalypse of St. John* was in 1922! The head of the British Medical Association, Sir William Whitla, put out the work as an answer to German Higher Criticism of the Bible, and dedicated it to the General of the Salvation Army who was doing so much "towards the hastening of the coming of the kingdom predicted in the Book of Daniel".⁵⁹ So, Newton's influence as a Bible interpreter has continued into this century. Perhaps, when his theological manuscripts have been published, we will be able to assess more accurately his entire theory and his originality and his stature as a commentator on the Scriptures, and be better able to assess if he was as great in this area as he was in the physical sciences.

I should like to suggest that there may be some relation of Newton's Biblical theology to his metaphysical theology. A kind of metaphysical theology appears in some of Newton's scientific and philosophical writings, in his proof of the existence of God, his discussion of God's nature, his thesis that space is the sensorium of God, his emphasis on the importance of God in physics in his letters to Bentley, and so on. These various scattered comments have led to many interpretations. It is clear that Newton held that God was the creator, designer and sustainer of the world. And he clearly held that the study of nature was the study of what God had created, and the laws by which He governed his creation.

These views, taken by themselves, do not entail any particular historical religious view, and many 18th-century deists built on just the metaphysical theology of Newton without putting it into a Biblical context. However, some of Newton's close disciples, such as William Whiston and Samuel Clarke, presented Newtonianism in science as part of the Christian world view. They contended that God had created the world in Newtonian terms, and that it persevered and would end according to Newton's laws. They contended that the natural and historical world operated to fulfill the prophecies in the Bible, and that the finale of world history would be that described in the Book of Revelation. Both Whiston and Clarke presented Newton's

⁵⁸ This theory of Newton is expounded in Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 659-669. Newton's text is quoted on pp. 665-666. Froom was the leading historian of the Seventh Day Adventists.

⁵⁹ Sir William Whitla, *Sir Isaac Newton's Daniel and the Apocalypse* (London, 1922).

physics and his physical theology as an outgrowth of his Biblical theology. God had created the physical world and the historical world. Both were to be understood by some kind of religious-scientific activity, as God progressively revealed both the natural clues and the Scriptural clues. As the end approached, both the world physically and the world spiritually would be seen as the twin message of God.⁶⁰

Newton's statement in the general scholium of the *Principia* certainly suggests a Biblical interpretation of the God of his physics, and a Judaic one at that. After offering his version of the deistic argument from design purporting to prove that an intelligent and powerful Being exists and governs the world, Newton asserted: "This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all, and on account of his dominion is wont to be called Lord God, or *Universal Ruler*, for *God* is a relative word, and as respects to servants; and *Deity* is the dominion of God not over his own body, as those imagine who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants. The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a being, however perfect, without dominion, cannot be said to be Lord God; for we say, my God, your God, the God of *Israel*, the God of Gods, and Lord of Lords, but we do not say, my Eternal, your Eternal, the Eternal of *Israel*, the Eternal of Gods; we do not say, my Infinite, or my Perfect; these are titles which have no respect to servants. The word God usually signifies *Lord*, but every lord is not a God. It is the dominion of a spiritual being which constitutes a God, a true, supreme, or imaginary dominion makes a true, supreme or imaginary God. And from his dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful Being: and, from his other perfections, that he is supreme, or most perfect. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; he governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be done. He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite, he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and, by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space... It is allowed by all that Supreme God exists necessarily; and by the same necessity he exists *always* and *everywhere*. Whence also he is similar, all eye, all ear, all brain, all arm, all power to perceive, to understand, and to act; but in a manner not at all human, in a manner not at all corporeal, in a manner utterly unknown to us. As a blind man has no ideas of colors, so we have no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things. He is

⁶⁰ Force, *Whiston*, chaps. 1, 4 and 5.

utterly void of all body and bodily figure, and can therefore neither be seen or heard, nor touched, nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any corporeal thing. . . We know him only by his most wise and excellent continuance of things and final causes; we admire him for his perfections; but we reverence and adore him on account of his dominion: for we adore him as his servants; and a god without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but Fate and Nature".⁶¹

Newton's stress on God's dominion, his omnipresence and transcendence, and his being beyond all human conceptions has a Judaic ring to it, rather than a deistic conception of a supreme architect. "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present" is out of the Judaic attempt to express the inexpressible. Perhaps it is here that the influence of Maimonides on Newton really shows.⁶²

As a closing note on this matter, let me just add the German philosopher, Friedrich Schelling, commented that Newton's philosophy was better than his science, and his philosophy was better than that of his successors because he saw that *Deitas est dominatio Dei*. The essence of God is not his substance but his *dominatio* in the act of his sovereignty. "Finally Newton says the decisive word. *Deus sive dominio providentia et causis finalibus nihil aliud est quam Fatum et Natura*. Providence and final cause, that is intentions executed in nature are only consequences of the dominion. One insight is enough. God without dominion, or, as I shall say from here on, because it is the true and original meaning of the word; God without *Herrlichkeit* would be a mere *Fatum* or a mere Nature".⁶³ What saves scientific deism from Spinozism is the insistence on God as dominator.

Before drawing this discussion to a close, a further comment should be made about Newton's Arianism. Newton firmly believed in his Biblical writings, that the true message of Scripture has been deliberately and maliciously hidden by the institutional church from at least the time of the villainous St. Athanasius, and his doctrine of

⁶¹ Newton, *Principia Mathematica. Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Motte translation (Berkeley, 1936), pp. 544-546.

⁶² Cf. R. H. Popkin, "Newton and Maimonides", in *A Straight Path, Essays in Honor of Arthur Hyman*, ed. Ruth Link Salinger et al, (Washington, 1988), pp. 216-229 [and below pp. 189 ff.].

⁶³ Friedrich Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empiricismus*, in Schelling, *Werke*, Band 10 (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1861), p. 261, translated by Dr. Fritz Marti. I am most grateful to Dr. Marti for bringing this discussion of Schelling's about Newton to my attention.

the Trinity to the present day Church of England. There was, for Newton, a conspiracy on the grandest scale to deceive. Hence, one had to be extremely cautious in letting the world know. This in part accounts for Newton's reluctance to publish his scientific views, and his fear of publishing his religious ones. He knew the lengths the villains of history had gone to to keep the truth hidden. Newton sought for almost sixty years to find a formulation of his overall discovery, Biblical and physical, that he could publish. He was unable to do so, and reacted ferociously when Whiston let the cat out of the bag, and stated the Newtonian scientific and Biblical theology in public.⁶⁴

The scientists found at the end of the 18th century they did not need Newton's theological physics. Laplace could tell Napoleon that he had no need of the God hypothesis in his completed Newtonian physics. The fundamentalists saw, from the little of Newton that was available, that he had not only seen the physical world in its entirety, but he had provided a very important formulation of their historical vision, that the end of days was at hand, as the American and French Revolutions unfolded, the Napoleonic wars, and on to the present scene. Newton as fundamentalist has been separated from Newton as scientist so that it now seems also incomprehensible that they could ever have been the connected vision of one sane man. I think if one starts from Newton's religious views, then perhaps it is not so strange that one with his prophetic vision could see nature and history as unfolding to the same climax.

⁶⁴ Force, *Whiston*, pp. 23-25.

XI

NEWTON AND MAIMONIDES

Whenever I have remarked to members of the scholarly community that there was some significant connection between the views of Moses Maimonides and those of Sir Isaac Newton, people (even friends) have looked at me very sceptically, suggesting that they felt: "There he goes again—Dick Popkin is always finding, or looking for, Jewish influences in the most extraordinary and least likely places." In fact, I think Maimonides was an important influence on Newton. At the present moment I am only beginning to explore this theme, and so can present only a project for thought here, with an indication of the materials to be explored and evaluated.

In a talk by the late Lord John Maynard Keynes in 1942 on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the birth of Sir Isaac Newton, Keynes said that Newton's radical religious views were not just those of a closet Arian Unitarian, but actually those of a monotheistic follower of Maimonides. This statement raised the eyebrows of Newton scholars, partly because it was so unexpected, partly because Newton scholars know little about Maimonides (and therefore cannot see any possible reason for Newton to follow him), and partly because it hardly seems likely that Lord Keynes knew much about Maimonides.¹

Keynes had become interested in Newton studies when the scandalous auction of the Viscount Lymington's collection of Newton papers was held at Sotheby's in 1939.² The Viscount had inherited the papers from a grandniece of Newton. He had tried to get Cambridge University, where Newton had studied and taught, or the British Museum, to take the papers. They both refused, because the papers were mainly on alchemy and theology, hardly subjects for which Newton was famous. Keynes used all the funds he could amass at the time to buy mainly the alchemical papers, which he then gave to King's

¹ John Maynard Keynes, *Essay in Biography* (London: Macmillan, 1961), "Newton, the Man", pp. 310-321: "he was rather a Judaic monotheist of the school of Maimonides", p. 316.

² An account of the history of Newton's papers appears in Richard S. Westfall, *Never at Rest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980, pp. 875-77.

College, which he had attended. They are now part of the Keynes Collection housed there.³

The other principal buyer at the auction, who bought the largest share of documents, principally religious and theological ones, was the noted scholar of Arabic and Hebrew medieval materials, Abraham Sholom Yahuda. Yahuda, a very wealthy Palestinian Jew, had taken his doctorate in Germany before World War I. He was invited to be Royal Professor of Medieval Rabbinics in Madrid. (Yahuda claimed to be the first Sephardi recalled to Spain since 1492.) He initiated medieval Jewish studies in Spain during World War I. He moved on to a professorship in Germany, and became a leading opponent of the official Zionist organization and its policies.⁴ He claimed to be a founder of Hebrew University, though he was never given an appointment there.⁵

Yahuda wrote a book in 1931-32 on the authenticity of the Bible, arguing that the Pentateuch had to have been written by an eyewitness to the exodus whose native language was Egyptian. The author, therefore, had to have been one of the escapees.⁶ Yahuda was severely criticized by the leading Egyptologists in Germany.⁷ That, plus the advent of Hitler, led him to move to England where he lectured at various universities.

Yahuda was a close friend of Einstein's, and arranged Einstein's move, first to a professorship in Spain (which he never occupied), and then to living in the Spanish embassy in London, before he left for Princeton. Einstein later signed the papers to bring Professor and Mrs. Yahuda to the United States in 1940.⁸

³ The Keynes Collection, King's College, Cambridge. The collection also contains some important theological papers.

⁴ See the article on A. S. Yahuda in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*. When Yahuda was in Spain, he became very friendly with Max Nordau, who wrote several accounts on Yahuda's role in Spanish and Portuguese academia for various periodicals. Clippings of these are in Yahuda's papers with his correspondence with Nordau, National Library of Israel.

⁵ This appears in the documents reproduced in the posthumous work his wife privately published on the errors of Chaim Weitzmann (identified in n. 20 below) and in the Yahuda-Einstein material in the Yahuda Newton manuscripts in the National Library of Israel, Yahuda Var. 1:42, box 1.

⁶ A. S. Yahuda, *The Accuracy of the Bible* (London: Heinemann, 1934), and *The Language of the Pentateuch in its Relation to Egyptian* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933).

⁷ Yahuda was criticized and attacked by leading Egyptologists including Prof. Wilhelm Spiegelberg, the father of Herbert Spiegelberg.

⁸ See the Yahuda-Einstein papers cited above.

Yahuda purchased about two million words of Newton's writings at the Sotheby auction. Letters—both his and Keynes's—in the Yahuda collection in Jerusalem indicate that as they each perused their treasure trove of Newton papers, they found the papers had not been properly sorted or arranged, so that Keynes had pieces of Yahuda's holdings and vice versa. They started meeting for tea in Bloomsbury to exchange pages of Newton and to talk about him.⁹

When Keynes's lecture on Newton appeared, Yahuda was in America, living in New Haven. He wrote a friend that he had always told Lord Keynes that Newton was a follower of Maimonides' monotheism, and not just a secret anti-Trinitarian, and Yahuda was glad to see that Keynes had accepted this evaluation.¹⁰ Yahuda was writing, but never finished, a study on the religion of Isaac Newton,¹¹ and his manuscript markings indicate he studied some of them closely. Yahuda's account explains how Lord Keynes came to find a close relationship between Newton and Maimonides—namely, that he had heard this from the learned Professor A. S. Yahuda, a leading authority on medieval Arabic and Jewish matters.

If my view has a decent ancestry, does it rest on anything besides Yahuda's statement? As soon as one looks into Newton's actual knowledge of Maimonides's writings and the latter's role in Newton's theological and religious writing, the basis of a case strikes one most forcefully. Newton possessed several works of Maimonides in Latin, and his copies exist at Cambridge. In the Yahuda papers there is a short manuscript by Newton entitled "On Maimonides" in Latin. Maimonides is frequently cited in other manuscript writings of Newton as a source and an authority. And, most intriguing of all, a manuscript that has been considered Newton's most mature statement of his religious views, on the origins of gentile theology, is in large part, if not entirely, drawn from the three-volume commentary of Gerard Vossius on his son Dionysius's edition of Maimonides's "Tractate on Idolatry." Newton owned the commentary, and it is described as heavily marked in the catalogue of Newton's library. I will discuss in more detail what is in Newton's manuscript on Maimonides, his use of Maimonides as a source, and the significance of his version of Vossius's commentary on Maimonides.

⁹ Yahuda's correspondence with Lord Keynes is in Yahuda 1:42, box 1.

¹⁰ Yahuda to Prof. G. F. Shiras, Yahuda 1:42, box 1.

¹¹ Typed manuscript, unfinished, on the religion of Isaac Newton, Yahuda 1:43, box 2.

First, I should say a word about why what I have just asserted is unknown except to a handful of Newton scholars. To begin with, the study of the role of Maimonides in Latin is in its infancy. Dr. Dienstag is compiling a bibliography of Latin editions, which are numerous, of Maimonides' philosophical and theological works.¹² Over the years, some of us have been struck by the fact that Maimonides was cited by scholars on the seventeenth century usually in Latin, but sometimes also in Hebrew. This occurs among writers in England, France, Holland, Germany, Switzerland, Italy, and probably in Poland, Scandinavia, and other Latin-reading parts of Europe. (America should also be included, because the Puritan divines at Harvard and Yale showed some acquaintance with Maimonides' work.) The 1984 study by Aaron Katchen on Dutch Hebraists and Rabbis just scratches the surface of a small portion of the interest by Dutch Christian theologians in Maimonides's theological writings, especially the *Mishneh Torah*.¹³

In the summer of 1986 I rummaged through a small part of the vast collection of theological works in the astounding collection in the Herzog August Bibliothek at Wolfenbüttel. Maimonides is cited by theologians of every camp. At Wolfenbüttel there is a huge collection of sale catalogues of the libraries of professors and noblemen, and copies of Maimonides' various works are in most of them. If one asks why, I think (1) it was part of the rediscovery of Judaica that played a role in Catholic-Protestant debates, and (2) it was part of trying to understand the Jewish point of view in order to prepare for the imminent conversion of the Jews that would precede the Second Coming of Jesus and the Millennium. Also, I offer as a hunch (3) Protestants had no equivalent of St. Thomas Aquinas. Jacob Boehme was a Protestant mystic at least as mystical and exciting as any Catholic one. But, they had no theologian who could join science, philosophy and religion. St. Thomas they could not accept or convert. Maimonides for the seventeenth century, perhaps, became their St. Thomas. This might account for the reverence and respect with which he was treated by Cambridge Platonists among others.

By the eighteenth century, a liberal deism became predominant and main-line Protestant groups neither needed nor wanted someone

¹² He has already published "Christian Translators of Maimonides-*Mishneh Torah* into Latin", in S. Liebermann and A. Hyman, eds., *Salomon Wittmayer Baron Jubilee Volume* (Jerusalem: American Academy for Jewish Research, 1975), pp. 287-309.

¹³ Aaron L. Katchen, *Christian Hebraists and Dutch Rabbis* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984). See my review of this volume in the *American Historical Review* (April 1986).

to harmonize their philosophy and religion. Instead they would have "philosophy of religion", essentially a Kantian innovation of religion within the limits of bare reason alone. At the end of the seventeenth century, Pierre Bayle could show his Maimonidean influence by insisting that his great work, the *Historical and Critical Dictionary*, was "*une guide pour les égarés*" (the title S. Munk used in the nineteenth century for the *Guide*).¹⁴ But now the "guide" was to show the total irrationality of traditional religion, and its replacement by scientific religion emerging from Newton's work.

The lack of sufficient communication and interest between scholars of Judaism and scholars of seventeenth-century Christianity has kept them from realizing how widespread Maimonides's influence was on Christian readers. And Newton, a student of such Maimonidean readers as Henry More and Ralph Cudworth, probably imbibed his Maimonidean ideas as a student at Trinity College. Newton also probably knew Rabbi Isaac Abendana, who worked with More on the *Kabbala Denudata*, and worked on a Latin translation of the *Mishna* for Cambridge University. (The manuscript is there. He was paid by the tractate, after Dr. Cudworth vouched each time for his efforts.)¹⁵

Newton's writings on Maimonides, and his use of Maimonides and of the Vossius commentary on Maimonides, could not be known until Yahuda's collection of Newton manuscripts had become available to the public. Yahuda had a vast collection of manuscripts, about fifteen hundred different collections or items, many of them priceless treasures. He carted them to America when he became a refugee in 1940. He hoped that, with the help of Einstein, he could find a happy home for the Newton papers. The correspondence between Einstein and Harvard, Yale and Princeton in 1940-41 is touching and amazing. Einstein stressed the importance of seeing the full range of Newton's genius. Yale University complained that it lacked space. Princeton University was interested only in scientific matters. Harvard asked George Sarton about the Newton papers, and Sarton replied that there was a war going on, and intellectuals had more important things

¹⁴ Pierre Bayle, *Historical and Critical Dictionary, Selections*, translated with an introduction by Richard H. Popkin (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1965), pp. xxiv-xxv, and references in the text.

¹⁵ See David S. Katz, 'The Abendana Brothers and the Christian Hebraists of Seventeenth-Century England', *Journal of Ecclesiastical History* 40 (1989), pp. 28-52, and my "Some Aspects of Jewish-Christian Theological Interchanges in Holland and England, 1640-1700", in J. van den Berg and E. G. E. van der Wall. *Jewish Christian Relations in the Seventeenth Century, Studies and Documents* (Dordrecht: Kluwer, 1988), pp. 3-32.

to do than browse through Newton's silly religious writings.¹⁶ Sarton, in fact, said that Newton's religious views were as irrelevant to his scientific views as Maimonides' medical opinions were to his rabbinical views.¹⁷

Yahuda was left with the Newton papers and kept them in his house in New Haven, where he was studying them. Shortly before his death, he, though a determined anti-Zionist, who opposed the establishment of the state of Israel and what it stood for, decided to will most of his collection to the National Library of Israel. A friend of his, who helped him come to this decision, said he told him that the collection should be where his heart is, even if he could not be there.¹⁸ The bequest was made and signed. Yahuda's widow consulted experts as to whether she should honor the will.¹⁹ She privately published a work of her late husband's attacking Chaim Weizmann, and then committed suicide.²⁰ The family opposed the will, and a trial dragged on for years about whether to send the materials to Israel. Only in 1969 were they shipped.²¹

The Newton collection is number 1 in Yahuda's handwritten catalogue. (Napoleoniana is number 2, and the holograph manuscript of one of Einstein's scientific works is number 3.)²² A short typewritten catalogue of what was in each bundle of the Newton papers was made by a visiting English scholar, David Castillejo,²³ and in 1972, at the request of Prof. Richard S. Westfall, the biographer of Newton, a microfilm of the Yahuda collection was made. Some few scholars

¹⁶ All of this appears in the correspondence between Einstein and the libraries. This is contained in Yahuda 1:42, box 1.

¹⁷ This appears in a letter of Yahuda to Nathan Isaacs, March 23, 1941, reporting a conversation with George Sarton, Yahuda 1:42, box 1. The letter is cited at the beginning of Frank Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974).

¹⁸ This was told to me in a private conversation in 1985 by the friend who so advised Yahuda.

¹⁹ Dr. Nadov, curator of manuscripts at the National Library of Israel, showed me a letter documenting this.

²⁰ The work is entitled *Dr. Weizmann's Errors on Trial*, privately printed in 1952.

²¹ The shipping order is one of the documents in Yahuda 1:42, box 1. It also lists all of the books sent to Israel and to the British Museum.

²² The Napoleon collection was bought shortly before Yahuda's death. One of the reasons for the purchase was the hope that the collection contained an actual proclamation by Napoleon urging the Jews of Asia and Africa to join him in rebuilding Jerusalem. In fact, it does not. The Einstein work is "Physik und Realität".

²³ The catalogue is five pages long, and relates each folder or bundle in Yahuda's collection to its lot number in the Sotheby catalogue of the 1936 sale. Castillejo also broke down the contents into separate items, and gave some descriptions.

have looked at the items in Jerusalem. So far only one short text has been published (by Frank Manuel).²⁴ Unless one had seen Castillejo's typescript, which is available only in the Yahuda boxes, one would not have known of the Newton work on Maimonides. Unless one read through the tedious, prolix manuscript writings of Newton, one would not realize how Maimonides is used as a source and an authority. And unless one had, for whatever reason, looked at Gerard Vossius's commentary on his son's edition of Maimonides's *De Idolatria*, one would not realize that Newton's so-called mature theological position is drawn from or resembles Vossius's views on Maimonides. Until all Newton's manuscripts are examined, one cannot give any definitive statement of the extent of Maimonides's influence on Newton.²⁵ There are, moreover, manuscripts of varying degrees of importance in libraries in Europe and America, besides the collection assembled by Keynes and Yahuda. There are still some manuscripts in private hands and in private libraries.²⁶ The study of the Vossius commentary requires a thorough knowledge of Christian theology of the period, of Maimonides, and of the importance of Maimonides's ideas at the time. Not being yet in a position to read all of Newton's unpublished papers, and not being knowledgeable enough to determine the import of the Vossius commentary, and the significance of any differences in Newton's text, I cannot give a definitive statement of the relationship of Newton to Maimonides. But I can survey the data with which I am familiar and suggest its importance for assessing the value that Newton attached to Maimonides's work.

Newton had five works of Maimonides in his personal library. (1) *De cultu divino ex R. Mosis Majemonidae secunda lege, seu Manu forti liber VIII. Dividitus in IX tractatus....Accesserunt tabulae . . . in quibus exprimitur Hierosolymitani Templi forma...Ex Hebraeo Latinum fecit, et notis illustravit L. de Comiegne de Veil* (Paris, 1678). (Newton was continually working on an exact description of Solomon's Temple.) (2) *R. Mosis Maimonidae, De idolatria liber cum interpretatione Latina et notis D. Vossii*, bound with the three-volume commentary of Gerard Joannes Vossius. (3) *De sacrificiis liber. Accesserunt*

²⁴ Published as "Appendix A" in Frank Manuel, *Religion*, pp. 107-25.

²⁵ Professors B. J. Dobbs, R. S. Westfall, and I are heading a committee to edit the alchemical and religious writings of Sir Isaac Newton. The edition will consist of twelve or more volumes.

²⁶ No history of the dispersion of Newton's manuscripts has been published. Westfall has compiled a nearly complete list of library holdings, but I have found other items in the University of Kentucky library, in the Seventh Day Adventist's library, and in private hands.

Abarbanelis exordium, seu proemium commentariorum in Leviticum: et Majemonidae Tractatus de consecratione calendarum et de ratione intercalandi, quae ex Hebreo convertit in sermonem Latinum, et notis illustrant L. de Compeigne de Veil (London, 1683). (4) *Porta Mo-sis, sive Dissertationes aliquot a R. Mose Maimonide, suis in varias Mishnaioth, sive textus Talmudici partes, commentariis praemissae . . . Arabici . . . conscriptae, et Latine editae . . . cum appendice notarum miscellanea opera . . . E. Pocockii* (Oxford, 1654-55). (5) *Tractatus de juribus anni septimi et jubilaevi. Textum Hebraeum addidit, in sermonem Latinum vertit, notisque illustravit J. H. Majus, filius* (Frankfurt-am-Main, 1708). Numbers 1, 2, 3 and 5 are sections of Maimonides' *Mishneh Torah*, and 4 is from Maimonides' commentary on the *Mishnah*.²⁷ No mention is made in the description of Newton's library that any of these copies are worn or marked in any way, except for *De idolatria*.

What is interesting is that two of the items were translated by Charles Marie de Veil, and that Newton's small manuscript on Maimonides is mainly notes and comments about De Veil's footnotes and interpretation. The manuscript, Yahuda 1:13.2, consists of notes from Maimonides and other Jewish writers. Its forty-four quarto pages, in a medium hand,²⁸ are fairly legible. A cursory examination by one who is neither a Maimonidean expert nor an expert on the theological issues involved shows that Newton was very much concerned about De Veil's notes and explanations.

Charles Marie de Veil should be of some interest to both Jewish scholars and scholars of biblical criticism in the seventeenth century. He was a Jew from Metz who was converted to Catholicism by Bishop Bossuet. He later came to England and became a Protestant clergyman, had a living in Fulham, and was under the protection of the bishop of London, Henry Compton. A testimonial in one of his theological works, published in 1681, says he became a Protestant in 1677, and joined the Church of England in 1678. He was given a good character reference by the bishop of London, by Simon Patrick, the bishop of Ely, by John Tillotson, archbishop of Canterbury, and by Edward

²⁷ John Harrison, *The Library of Isaac Newton* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1978), items #1018-1022, p. 186. I have given the titles from the British Library listings, which are more complete.

²⁸ In the Sotheby *Catalogue of the Newton Papers sold by order of the Viscount Lynton*, July 13-14, 1936, it is listed as "Ex. Maimonide Lib. de Cultu Divino, 16pp (stained and partly illegible)", p. 66, item 239.

Stillingfleet, bishop of Worcester, John Locke's enemy. Apparently De Veil later became an Anabaptist and died around 1690.²⁹

He first became important for his examination of Richard Simon's very provocative *Critical History of the Old Testament*, done at the request of leading French and English Protestants (indicating that they regarded him as having expertise in this matter). De Veil published a letter to Robert Boyle in French in London in 1678, saying that Father Simon's critique (which Newton had in his library and used extensively in his own biblical criticism) was intended to ruin Protestantism, and would undermine the foundation of the original Greek and Roman churches as well as the Jewish religion.³⁰ De Veil's erudition became part of the material that was argued over during the next decade. De Veil published several Latin treatises explaining various biblical questions and the Jewish background of the New Testament.³¹ Newton did not own any of these works, but was apparently excited by De Veil's comments on Maimonides. I hope that this seems sufficiently intriguing to a Maimonidean scholar who will examine De Veil's and Newton's notes, to evaluate their significance.

In Newton's many drafts about theological history, Maimonides is often cited as a source. I have not gone through the Yahuda collection looking specifically for references to Maimonides but have noted some specific cases, as in Newton's manuscripts on the temple and the sacred cubit (Yahuda 1:2.4), which Westfall dates to the late 1670's or early 1680's, and in which much use is made of *De cultu divino*, and in Newton's manuscript on the prophecies (Yahuda 1:9.2) from the early 1690's, in which two tractates of that work are used. Maimonides is considered a source of information and interpretation about ancient Judaism and paganism. And Newton seems to have accepted Maimonides as authoritative on these matters.

²⁹ Biographical information about him is given in Louis I. Bredvold, *The Intellectual Milieu of John Dryden* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1934), p. 102n; and Dienstag, "Translators", pp. 302-304: "Having converted to Christianity while still a youth, he studied theology at the Sorbonne, and devoted himself to the interpretation of Maimonides' code *Mishnah Torah*, of which he translated into Latin", Dienstag then lists ten publications of editions of Maimonides by De Veil. See the testimonial to De Veil in the preface to his *Sacrae Theologiae Doctoris Ecclesiasticae Explicatio literalis* (London, 1681).

³⁰ Bredvold, *Milieu*, p. 103.

³¹ See Charles de Veil, *Explicatio literatis duodecim Prophetarum minorum ex ipsis Scripturarum fontibus, Hebraeorum Ritibus & Idiomatis*, (London, 1681); *Ecclesiaste Explicatio Literalis ex ipsis Scripturarum fontibus, Hebraeorum Ritibus & Idiomatis* (London, 1681). The latter work contains many explanations based on Hebrew texts.

Westfall, in the only mention of Maimonides in his 900-page intellectual biography of Newton, notes that "being the man he was, he plunged into an extensive program of reading Josephus, Philo, Maimonides, and the Talmudic scholars in order to find a 'type' or 'figure' in Jewish religious practices to aid in understanding Biblical prophecies",³² Newton was convinced that Jewish practices and the symbolism of Revelation were "like twin prophecies of the same thing" that mutually explicate each other, and cannot be satisfactorily understood apart from one another",³³ Maimonides, therefore, especially in *De cultu divino*, provided considerable data and interpretation that Newton was looking for. A careful survey of Newton's theological manuscripts, in the Yahuda collection and others in England, Switzerland and America, should reveal the extent to which Newton relied on Maimonides as an interpreter and as a source of information.

What I think will prove most interesting and exciting is the examination of Maimonidean influence in Newton's *Theologicae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae*, which is Yahuda 1:16, seventy-three folio pages, of which two are blank. Westfall, in his article on this work, dates it soon after late 1683.³⁴ He considers it Newton's mature theology in which he was moving from Arianism to a kind of deism. Westfall further claimed that the *Origines* is "more radical than any Arian statement he composed during the 1670s",³⁵

The manuscript itself is described by Westfall as "chaotic", "a confused, missorted mass, half Latin and half English", from the hands of Newton and his amanuensis, with successive drafts of the same material.³⁶ Yahuda 1:17 "contains rough material pertaining to it", and an earlier version.³⁷ Yahuda typed out a description of the manuscript, and gave its table of contents. Yahuda wrote that Newton had identified the ancient gods with various historical personages, or with physical items like stars. Yahuda saw Newton as giving a detailed history of the Mediterranean peoples by relating their religious figures to historical persons and events. And there is a note by Yahuda

³² Westfall, *op.cit.*, p. 346.

³³ *Ibid.*

³⁴ R. S. Westfall, "Isaac Newton's *Theologiae Gentilis Origines Philosophicae*", in W. Warren Wager, *The Secular Mind, Essays Presented to Franklin L. Baumer* (New York and London, 1984), p. 16.

³⁵ Westfall, *Never at Rest*, p. 351.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 351n.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 352n.

that he took two leaves out of the manuscript and moved them to another one, and added twenty-one leaves from the other to this one.³⁸

Yahuda did not seem to realize that Newton's title is that of Gerard Vossius's commentary on his son's edition of Maimonides' *De Idolatria*. Westfall, in *Never at Rest*, does not mention this either. But in his article on Newton's *Origines*, Westfall gives one reference to the Vossius volume as one of the authorities upon whom Newton drew. "Vossius, a bottomless sink of miscellaneous erudition",³⁹ was, by his own admission, a Protestant apologist, according to Westfall, hence quite different from Newton, a radical Arian en route to becoming a deist. The only references Westfall gives to Vossius's text is to two chapters, stating that his work was intended to emphasize the truth of Christianity by contrasting it with pagan religion.⁴⁰

Vossius's work is much more. It is a three-volume work, the first volume of which appeared immediately after his son's text, a Latin translation and commentary on Maimonides's *De Idolatria*, printed by the same firm, Johann and Cornelius Blaeu, in Amsterdam in 1641.⁴¹ What is striking is that Newton's text is sometimes the same as Vossius's, sometimes a paraphrase, sometimes a variation, sometimes a digest.

For example, chapter 5 of Newton's *Origines* is on the identification of Mizraim, the son of Ham, with Osiris. Vossius wrote "*Antiquissimus Osiris videtur Mitsraim, Cham filius*", Newton wrote: "*Ut Mizraim fuit Chami filius et Aegypti totius Rex et Pater, sic etiam Osiris*",⁴² Newton's chapters identifying Noah with Saturn and Janus, Chus with Hercules, Mars, Moloc and Belus, Mizraim with Osiris, Serapis, and Menoetius, correspond to sections in Vossius.⁴³ The chapter headings of the five missing chapters also correspond to sections in Vossius's text. There are so many striking similarities in Vossius's text, especially in book I, and Newton's, that a careful line-by-line comparison needs to be done to determine how much Newton was drawing from Vossius, and whether Newton was constructing a different view from that of Vossius. The latter may have said that he

³⁸ Yahuda's typed note that precedes Ms. 1:16. Yahuda was apparently trying for years to get his Newton materials into correct order.

³⁹ Westfall, "Newton's *Theologiae Gentilis*", p. 22.

⁴⁰ These are chapters 41 and 42 of Book I of Gerard Vossius, *De Theologia Gentilis*, 3 vols. (Amsterdam, 1641); photoreproduced New York: Garland, 1976).

⁴¹ On Dionysius Vossius and the edition of *De Idolatria*, see Katchen, *Hebraists*, chap. 3.

⁴² Newton, *Origines Theologiae Gentilis*, cap. 5, fol. 73, Yahuda 1:16.

⁴³ Gerard Vossius, *De Theologia*, I. 18.

was showing how good Christianity was in comparison with paganism, but was he genuinely doing that?

Another son of Gerard Vossius, Isaac, Queen Christina's librarian, and later Anglican prebend of Windsor, who was alive when Newton was writing his *Origines*, was accused of being a sceptic, a deist, and an atheist. Isaac Vossius had been privately educated by his father and may have reflected his father's views.⁴⁴ One must remember that Gerard Vossius was writing in 1641, before much freethinking about Christianity was possible in print. Isaac Newton and Isaac Vossius were both writing after Spinoza and Richard Simon and various sceptics, and when freethinkers like Charles Saint-Evremond (a good friend of Isaac Vossius and of Spinoza) were the toast of elegant, aristocratic society in England. And Gerard Vossius in 1641 was, in part, justifying his deceased son's achievement in editing, translating, and publishing the work of a Jewish savant.

Gerard Vossius discussed many of the themes that were taken up by Maimonides and does refer to passages in Maimonides's *Guide*.⁴⁵ Newton's copy of Gerard Vossius's work is described as "very extensively dog-eared with 112 pages still turned and several similar signs",⁴⁶ (The son's edition of Maimonides has "a few signs of dog-earing"),⁴⁷ This gives someone a place where to start the comparison—the 112 pages of Vossius with what is in the Newton manuscripts.

After these passages have been studied, one will be able to assess (1) what is original or different in Newton from what is in Gerard Vossius, and (2) what Maimonidean themes and theses moved, and perhaps changed, from the Latin edition of *De idolatria* to the Dionysius Vossius commentary, and then to his father's commentary, and on to Newton's glosses, reflections, and amendments. At this point we could genuinely ascertain the influence of Maimonides on Newton before as a source of data and as a religious and theological interpreter. If Newton's *Origines* is really his final mature position, we could see to what extent it emerges from the Maimonidean sources once and twice and thrice removed into seventeenth-century Christian discussion.

It is my hope that a scholar, with the necessary background, will be found to take up this study—on Vossius's *Origines* and Newton's

⁴⁴ See the article on Isaac Vossius in the *Dictionary of National Biography*.

⁴⁵ Gerard Vossius, *De Theologia*, I, (p. 57).

⁴⁶ Harrison, *Library of Isaac Newton*, p. 258.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.* p. 186.

Origines. The results could shed much light on the role of Maimonidean ideas in the Newtonian world.

Westfall sees Newton's incipient deism in the *Origines* as the basis for the theology that appears in Newton's greatest scientific works, the *Principia* and the *Opticks*.⁴⁸ But there is another aspect of Newton's public theology, as it appears in the famous "General Scholium" in the *Principia*. After offering his version of the deistic argument from design purporting to prove that an intelligent and powerfull Being exists and governs the world, Newton asserted:

This Being governs all things, not as the soul of the world, but as Lord over all; and on account of his dominion is wont to be *Lord God*, . . . or *Universal Ruler*, for *God* is a relative word, and has a respect to servants; and *Deity* is the dominion of God not over his own body, as those imagine who fancy God to be the soul of the world, but over servants. The Supreme God is a Being eternal, infinite, absolutely perfect; but a being, however perfect without dominion, cannot be said to be Lord God; for we say, my God, your God, the God of *Israel*, the God of Gods and Lord of Lords, but we do not say, my Eternal, your Eternal, the Eternal of *Israel*, the Eternal of Gods; we do not say, my Infinite, my Perfect: these are titles which have no respect to servants. The word God usually signifies *Lord*; but every lord is not a God. It is the dominion of a spiritual being which constitutes a God: a true, supreme, or imaginary dominion makes a true, supreme, or imaginary God. And from his dominion it follows that the true God is a living, intelligent, and powerful Being; and, from his other perfections, that he is supreme, or most perfect. He is eternal and infinite, omnipotent and omniscient; that is, his duration reaches from eternity to eternity; his presence from infinity to infinity; he governs all things, and knows all things that are or can be. He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite; he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present; and, by existing always and everywhere, he constitutes duration and space....It is allowed by all that the Supreme God exists necessarily, and by the same necessity he exists *always* and *everywhere*. Whence also he is similar, all eye, all ear, all brain, all arm, all power to perceive, to understand, and to act; but in a manner not at all human, in a manner not at all corporeal, in a manner utterly unknown to us. As a blind man has not ideas of color, so we have no idea of the manner by which the all-wise God perceives and understands all things. He is utterly void of all body and bodily figure, and can therefore neither be seen or heard, nor touched; nor ought he to be worshipped under the representation of any corporeal thing....We know him only by his most wise and excellent continuance of things and final causes; we admire him for his perfections; but we reverence and adore him on account of his dominion: for we adore him as his servants; and a god without dominion, providence, and final causes, is nothing else but Fate and Nature.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Westfall, "Newton's *Theologicae Gentilis*", p. 16.

⁴⁹ Isaac Newton, *Principia Mathematica, Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy*, Motte translation (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1936), pp. 544-546.

Newton's stress on God's dominion, omnipresence, and transcendence, and God's being beyond all human conceptions has a Judaic ring to it, rather than a deistic conception of a supreme architect. "He is not eternity and infinity, but eternal and infinite, he is not duration or space, but he endures and is present. He endures forever, and is everywhere present" is out of the Judaic attempt to express the inexpressible. Perhaps it is here that the Maimonidean influence really shows.

As a closing note, let me just add that the German philosopher Friedrich Schelling commented that Newton's philosophy was better than his science, and his philosophy was better than that of his successors because he saw that *Deitas est dominatio Dei*. The essence of God is not God's substance but God's *dominatio* in the act of sovereignty. "Finally Newton says the decisive word. *Deus, sive dominio, providentia et causis finalibus nihil aliud est quam Fatum et Natura*: providence and final cause—that is, intentions executed in nature—are only consequences of *dominii*. One insight is enough. God without dominion, or, as I shall say from here on because it is the true and original meaning of the Word: God without *Herlichkeit* would be a mere Fatum or a mere Nature",⁵⁰ What saves scientific deism from Spinozism is the insistence on God as dominator. This, then, may be Newton's Jewish inheritance of which Yahuda and Keynes spoke—Newton as the follower of Maimonides, rather than Newton as the anti-Trinitarian Arian.

⁵⁰ Friedrich Schelling, *Darstellung des philosophischen Empirismus*, in Schelling, *Werke* (Stuttgart and Augsburg, 1861), Vol. 10, p. 261. Translation by Dr. Fritz Marti. I am most grateful to Dr. Marti for bringing this discussion of Schelling's about Newton to my attention.

XII

THE "INCURABLE SCEPTICISM" OF HENRY MORE, BLAISE PASCAL AND SØREN KIERKEGAARD

It has often been observed that the weakest part of the sceptical challenge from Sextus to Hume is that designed to bring about a "scepticism with regard to reason". The sceptic is usually willing to accept the rules of reasoning or the laws of logic as unquestioned or unquestionable, and has then raised problems about whether one can determine in a given instance whether the rules have been properly applied. Hume in *Treatise* IV, i, began by 1 saying, "In all demonstrative sciences the rules are certain and infallible; but when we apply them, our fallible and uncertain faculties are very apt to depart from them, and fall into error".¹

The sceptical problem with regard to reason, then becomes "can we tell in a given instance that we have employed the rules correctly?" This, he said, requires a judgment, not about the rules, but about our ability to apply them. The correctness of this judgment depends on our ability to judge our ability to apply the rules. This then generates an endless series of judgments each of whose truth values is less than perfect or 1. The product of these truth values will then get smaller and smaller until, supposedly, our belief in the truth of any rational judgment will approach zero, and we should have no confidence in any judgment at all.

Hume realized this did not happen, and explained this by informing us that nature won't let us go on doubting and questioning like this, and by an absolute and incontrollable necessity requires us to judge as well as to breathe and feel.² So, though Hume did not claim that doubts about the application of mathematical or logical rules could be overcome, they became untenable psychologically. Others, like Gassendi indicated the application problem could not be overcome but it could be "reasonably" dealt with.³

¹ David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1951), p. 180.

² *Ibid.*, pp. 181-183.

³ Pierre Gassendi, *Disquisitio metaphysica seu, dubitationes et instantiae adversus Renati Cartesii, et responsa*, ed. Bernard Rochot (Paris, 1962); and *Institutio Logica*, ed. Howard Jones (Assen, 1981).

Another kind of scepticism with regard to reason was to try to show that logical systems were "big with contradiction and absurdity".⁴ From Sextus to Hume this was attempted with regard to arithmetic and geometry. Sextus suggested to us the contradiction and absurdity of arithmetic by pointing out that if the whole equals the sum of its parts, then $6=15$ since the parts of 6 are 5,4,3,2 and 1. 6 also = 120 since the parts of 15 are 14, 13 and 1.⁵ Hume sought to show that there was something crazy about a tangent meeting a circle in one and only one point, and confused the empirical case with the purely geometrical case.⁶

Pierre Bayle offered a much stronger contention in article "Pyrrho", note B, where he said that a self-evidently false proposition could follow from two necessarily true premises.⁷ His opponents like Jean le Clerc and Isaac Jacquelot found their heads swimming as they tried to grasp what Bayle was claiming. They saw all rationality disappearing if his contention made any sense.⁸ Unfortunately for the sceptical side, Bayle's examples depended on accepting so-called self-evident maxims of philosophy and juxtaposing them to claims of the Christian religion. These ceased to be great problems if one either interpreted the Christian claims differently, or did not accept them. Bayle's possibility would create havoc if necessarily true premises could yield evidently false conclusions, and this may yet happen in view of the limits of how systems can be proven to be consistent. Bayle's possibility remains a "speculative" ground for scepticism with regard to reason and has been used by the Dutch intuitionist mathematicians as a reason for restricting the application of rules like the law of the excluded middle to finite, or constructable numbers.⁹

Hume had said that there was another kind of scepticism with regard to reason, which if it could even be entertained, would be

⁴ This is a phrase of Hume's, employed in *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, sec. XII, part ii, ed. Selby-Bigge (Oxford, 1951), p. 157.

⁵ Sextus Empiricus, *Outlines of Pyrrhonism*, ed. Loeb Library (Cambridge Mass., 1939), Book III, chap. xii, sec. 85-88, pp. 387-389.

⁶ David Hume, *Enquiry* (cf. note 4 *supra*) Sec. XII, part ii, p. 157.

⁷ Pierre Bayle, *Dictionnaire historique et critique*, art. "Pyrrhon", Rem. B.

⁸ Cf. Isaac Jacquelot, *Conformité de la foi avec raison; ou défense de la religion contre les principales difficultez répandues dans le Dictionnaire historique et critique de Mr. Bayle* (Amsterdam, 1705), Part II, chap. 10, pp. 265-280; and Jean LeClerc, review of Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, in *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, Vol. XIV (Amsterdam, 1720), pp. 383-392, and review of the Fabricius edition of Sextus Empiricus, *Bibliothèque ancienne et moderne*, Vol. XIV (Amsterdam, 1720), pp. 1-113.

⁹ Cf. Arend Heyting, *Intuitionism*, (Amsterdam, 1971).

incurable. "There is a species of scepticism, antecedent to all study and philosophy, which is much inculcated by Descartes and others, as a sovereign preservative against error and precipitate judgment. It recommends an universal doubt, not only of all our former opinions and principles, but also of our very faculties, of whose veracity, say they, we must assure ourselves, by a chain of reasoning, deduced from some original principle, which cannot possibly be fallacious or deceitful. But neither is there any such original principle, which has a prerogative above others, that are self-evident and convincing, or if there were, could we advance a step beyond it, but by the use of those very faculties, of which we are supposed to be already diffident. The Cartesian doubt, therefore, were it ever possible to be attained by any human creature (as it plainly is not) would be entirely incurable; and no reasoning could ever bring us to a state of assurance and conviction upon any subject".¹⁰

Whether Hume is right that Descartes cannot undo the damage by "proving" that God is no deceiver, is not relevant to our present concerns. Two of Descartes' opponents, Henry More and Blaise Pascal, definitely stated and made crucial the possibility that our faculties may be defective or erroneous and that we have no way of eliminating this possibility, and then sought to provide assurance and conviction on religious, scientific and mathematical subjects. Søren Kierkegaard in the mid-nineteenth century, to destroy Hegelian rationalism, made the scepticism with regard to our faculties more dramatic, more significant, and only resolvable by super-human means. In this paper I want to compare and contrast these three versions of 'incurable' scepticism, explore their professed forms of certainty, and briefly look at the influence each version had.

Henry More, like his teacher, Joseph Mede, went into a sceptical crisis as soon as he began his studies at Cambridge. Mede reported that in 1603, when a freshman, he chanced upon a copy of Sextus Empiricus, and all of his views became dubious. He asked himself whether "the whole Frame of things, as it appears to us, were any more than a mere Phantasm or Imagination". He struggled with his 'crise pyrrhonienne' by seeking truth in all of the subjects taught at Cambridge, and finally found it in proper reading of Biblical prophecies. Mede wrote one book, *Clavis Apolyptica*, which had his answer. He had found the truth that the Millennium, the Thousand Year Reign of Christ on Earth, was soon to begin. The rest of Mede's writ-

¹⁰ David Hume, *Enquiry* (cf. note 4 supra), Sec. XII, pp. 149-150.

ings are explanations of his interpretations and expansions of them.¹¹ His disciple, William Twisse, tried to give his view an epistemological basis in his *The Doubting Conscience Resolved. An Answer to a pretended perplexing Question, etc. Wherein it is evidently proved, that the holy Scriptures (not the Pope) is the Foundation whereupon the Church is built. Or that a Christian may be infallibly certain of his Faith and Religion by the Holy Scripture* (1652).¹² Another disciple, John Dury, tried to convince Descartes, while the latter was writing the *Discourse on Method* that the way to certainty was through infallibly interpreting the Biblical prophecies, and not through mathematics. Descartes was obviously not convinced.¹³

Henry More arrived at Cambridge in 1631, and began his studies at Christ's College. He avidly sought the truth in the philosophies of Aristotle, Cardano, Scaliger, among others. But he found most of what they said, "seemed to me either so *false* or *uncertain*, or else so *obvious* and trivial". After four years of study of philosophy, he reported that he "ended in nothing, in a manner, but mere Scepticism". He described his "crise pyrrhonienne" in a poem that he wrote in Greek and translated as follows:

"Know I Nor whence, nor who I am, poor Wretch! Nor yet, O Madness! Whither I must goe: But in Grief's crooked Claws fast held I lie; And live, I think, by force tugg'd to and fro. Asleep or wake all one. O Father Jove, 'Tis brave, we Mortals live in Clouds like thee. Lies, Night-dreams, empty toys, fear, fatal love, This is my life: I nothing else do see".¹⁴

More began to wonder if knowledge of things would yield supreme happiness, or was there some greater and more divine way. Should he read more authors, contemplate the world, or purge his mind of vice? He started reading Platonic, Hermetic and mystical authors who led

¹¹ On Mede, see John Worthington, "The Life of the Reverend and Most Learned Joseph Mede", in *The Works of the Pious and Profoundly-Learned Joseph Mede* (London, 1664); Katherine R. Firth, *The Apocalyptic Tradition in Reformation Britain 1530-1645* (Oxford, 1979), chap. VII; Leroy Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, 1948), Vol. II, pp. 542 ff; R. H. Popkin, "The Third Force in 17th Century Philosophy: Scepticism, Science and Biblical Prophecy", in *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres*, 1983, pp. 36 ff; and Ernest Lee Tuveson, *Millennium and Utopia* (Gloucester, Mass., 1972), pp. 76-85.

¹² The theory presented in this work is discussed in Popkin, "Third Force", pp. 99-103, above.

¹³ The account of this is in the papers of Samuel Hartlib at Sheffield University. The document has been reproduced in G. H. Turnbull, *Hartlib, Dury and Comenius* (London, 1947); and C. De Waard, "Un Entretien avec Descartes en 1634 ou 1635", in *Archives internationales d'histoire des sciences* VI (1953), pp. 14-16.

¹⁴ Richard Ward, *The Life of the Learned and Pious Dr. Henry More* (London, 1710), pp. 10-11.

him to see that purgation had to precede illumination from God. He was finally saved by "that Golden little book", the *Theologica Germania*, a pious mystical work that had transformed Luther about a century and a half earlier.¹⁵ This work led More to accept whatever God pleased to communicate to him. In so doing he found "greater Assurance than ever I could have expected".¹⁶

More then discovered and rejected Descartes's philosophy and began to formulate his own. As he said in the preface to the *Collection* of his early works of 1662, Descartes took the low road of materialism and More the high road of Platonism, but they met at the entrance to the Holy Scripture, trying to give the most approvable interpretation of the first three chapters of *Genesis* since the ancient Jewish Cabbala was lost.¹⁷ Using Cartesianism and Platonism, More found the golden key to unlock the secrets of *Genesis*, "those two dazeling Paradoxes of the Motion of the Earth and the Praexistence of the Soul"—the basis for the new science and a new spiritlegy.¹⁸

From the time of his rejection of Descartes, More worried that a materialistic explanation of the world could lead to atheism, as could an "enthusiastic one". In 1655 he published *An Antidote against Atheism. Or An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man whether there be or not a God*, dedicated to Lady Anne Conway. Oddly, More, in order to refute atheism, felt he had to base his case on the free use of the natural faculties of the human mind, which would overcome the atheist's scepticism. If the atheists "wil with us but admit one *Postulate* or *Hypothesis*, that Our faculties are true", then he will profess there is a God.¹⁹ But what is the evidence for this "postulate" or "hypothesis"? More immediately admitted that his arguments are not such "that a mans understanding shall be forced to confesse that it is impossible to be otherwise than I have concluded".²⁰ In fact, More said, nothing can be so demonstrated "For it is possible that *Mathematicall* evidence itself, may be but a constant undiscoverable delusion, which our nature is necessarily and prepetually obnoxious unto, and that either fatally or fortuitously

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 12-14.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

¹⁷ Henry More, *A Collection of Several Philosophical Writings*, 2nd ed. (London, 1662), "Preface general", p. xii.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. xx.

¹⁹ Henry More, *An Antidote Against Atheism, Or, An Appeal to the Natural Faculties of the Minde of Man whether there be not a God*, 2nd ed. (London, 1655), B3v-B4r.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, Lib. I, chap. 2, p. 3.

there has been in the world time out of minde such a Being as we call *Man*, whose essential property it is to be then most of all mistaken, when he conceives a thing most evidently true". If there is no God, why can't this perpetually deluded human being exist?²¹

More did not say he would, like Descartes, prove God is no deceiver. He would not even produce such arguments "that the Reader shall acknowledge so strong, as he shall be forced to confesse that it is utterly impossible that it should be otherwise". Nonetheless his arguments will be such as shall deserve full assent, and win full assent from any unprejudiced mind.²²

More had clearly set up an "incurable scepticism" to eliminate the possibility of necessarily true demonstrations. The value of any argument depends on the value or function of our faculties. As long as our faculties can be delusive and/or deluded, any result of reasoning "may possibly be otherwise". Nonetheless, More, instead of giving up rational discourse, then proceeded to offer his antidote to atheism. For the rest of his life he was working out "the true Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion" (which appears in a book dedicated to Jesus of Nazareth, the Crucified Son of God, and has on one of its title pages a motto from Sextus Empiricus on why nothing can be proved).²³ The antidote is to point out that a person who does not assent to certain evidences is "next door to madness or dotage" and does enormous violence to the free use of his faculties.²⁴ This does not answer or remove or overcome the incurable scepticism. The atheist can say over and over again that in spite of all of More's evidence "it may possibly be otherwise". The clearest mathematical evidence may be false, unless our faculties are true. If we can accept mathematical truths "supposing no distemper nor violence offered to her Faculties", then we can accept a proof of the existence of an absolutely perfect being.²⁵

Having made the case that one would be mad, senile, obtuse, to refuse to accept some evidence, though it may be false due to our

²¹ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

²³ *The True Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion* appears on pp. 765-770 of More's *Theological Works* (London, 1708). The volume is dedicated to "Jesu Nazareno Crucifixo Dei Filio". The second title page, p. 385, to *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity*, contains a motto from Sextus Empiricus, chap. VI, "Does Proof Exist?" The original publication of the work in 1664 had a shorter motto from Sextus on the title page.

²⁴ Henry More, *Antidote Against Atheism*, p. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

faulty faculties, More had to hold off another avenue to certainty, namely that something is true because we are firmly persuaded of it. Living through, and staying aloof from, the Puritan Revolution, More encountered lots of people who were sure; completely sure. His *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus* of 1656, is directed to this kind of personal certainty. "For *Enthusiam* is nothing else but a misconceit of being inspired. Now to be *inspired is*, to be moved in an extraordinary manner by the power or Spirit of God to act, speak, or think what is holy, just and true. From hence it will be easily understood what *Enthusiasm* is, viz, A full but false, persuasion in a man that he is inspired".²⁶ More then sought to diagnose why people thought they were inspired when they were not, and offered a rudimentary theory that enthusiasts were a type of mad persons, while genuinely inspired people were not. Various signs or symptoms were pointed out for distinguishing the sick enthusiast from the healthy religious person.²⁷

In More's *The Immortality of the Soul, so Farreforth as it is demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason*, published in 1659, he seemed to have realized that his scepticism with regard to our faculties could be carried too far and make any knowledge impossible. So, he said "to stop all Creep-holes and leave no place for the subterfuges and evasions of confused and cavilling spirits", he would offer some axioms that are so plain and evident "that no man in his wits but will be ashamed to deny them, if he will admit any thing at all to be true".²⁸ This, of course does not establish the truth of the axioms since they can be doubted. But this constitutes "perfect Scepticisme, it is a disease incurable, and a thing rather to be pitied or laughed at, then seriously opposed. For when a man is so fugitive and unsettled that he will not stand to the verdict of his own Faculties, one can no more fasten any thing upon him, than he can write in the water, or tye knots of the wind".²⁹ Doubt of our faculties may not be answerable but leads to intellectual catastrophe. Those who are reasonable will accept More's rules, which involve accepting our faculties as reliable. Axiom V, which is central to having any assurances is "Whatever is clear to any one of these

²⁶ Henry More, *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus, Or, A Discourse of Nature, Causes, Kinds and Cure of Enthusiasme* (London, 1656), p. 2.

²⁷ This is the burden of the rest of *Enthusiasmus Triumphatus*.

²⁸ Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul, so Farre Forth as it is Demonstrable from the Knowledge of Nature and the Light of Reason* (London, 1659), pp. 4-5.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Three Faculties, is to be held undoubtedly true, the other having nothing to evidence to the contrary".³⁰

When he came to lay out "the Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion", More managed to present a basis for "a *certain* and *firm* Faith" and a true one in spite of the incurable scepticism about our faculties. This, More claimed, would be by "all impartial and unprejudiced Examiners" whose judgments had not been perverted by education, passion or interest.³¹ The first basis of the certainty of faith presupposes certainty of both reason and sense "rightly circumstantiated". Reason is needed to persuade us that testimony is infallible, and sense to guarantee us of the infallible testimony of sense, such as that Moses actually did converse with God, and that the report was not a dream, and that Jesus was resurrected and the eye-witness reports were not a delusion "Wherefore to take away the *Certainty of Sense rightly circumstantiated*, is to take away all Certainty of Belief in the main Points of Religion".³²

So, if true religion depends on our faculties properly employed, More then offered Aristotle's criterion for right functioning senses, and an argument from catastrophe to define right functioning reason. The senses are rightly circumstantiated when the sense organ is sound, the medium "fitly qualified" and the distance of the object duly proportionated. Reason functions properly in a "perfectly-unprejudiced Mind, or at least unprejudiced touching the Point propounded". There are some truths that are so clear that they have to be assented to, unless a person is besotted or quite mad. From this More concluded there are natural truths in logic, physics and mathematics that are so palpably true, that they "appear so as well to the *Wicked* as the *Good*, if they be *Compotes mentis*, and do not manifest Violence to their Faculties".³³ This is made stronger by contending that these natural truths are so palpably true that they appear so both to evil and good persons, and are at least as certain and indubitable as anything that reason and understanding can give assent to. "There is at least as great a Certainty of the Axioms that they are true, as there can be of any".³⁴ The unstated point still remains that these truths *appear* or are *assented* to as certain, provided our

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

³¹ Henry More, *A Brief Discourse of the True Grounds of the Certainty of Faith in Points of Religion*, in *Theological Works*, p. 765.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 766.

³³ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

³⁴ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

faculties can be trusted. Then on the basis of these truths, More built up his case for his version of Christianity.

Thus, More, having introduced the "incurable scepticism" with regard to reason, pushed it aside by insisting only madmen or fools doubted their faculties. The certainty of reason and the senses should lead all unprejudiced people to the true morality and true religion.

More's original statement in the *Antidote to Atheism* was that of a most extreme scepticism. He immediately retreated to build his case for religious and scientific knowledge on what one had to believe if one trusted one's faculties.

Given how sceptical More had been, there is still the haunting possibility that being *compotes mentis* is also being deluded. More never overcame this, but just insulted anyone who still entertained it as wicked or stupid.

Considering how monumental More's original sceptical crisis was, it is touching that he ended up calmly presenting his interpretation of the Book of Revelation, and his use of the Cabbala, as the surest view humans could have.³⁵ Two of his friends and partial disciples, John Wilkins and Joseph Glanvill, still accepted More's original incurable scepticism, but so mitigated it, or trivialized it, as to make it uninteresting and unexciting.

Wilkins' *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion*, first published in 1675, stated that the highest kind of certainty, absolute infallibility, is beyond human beings. They base their knowledge and assent on a conditional infallibility, "that which supposes our faculties to be true, and that we do not neglect the exerting of them". Based on this supposition, "there is a necessity that some things must be so as we apprehend them, and that they cannot possibly be otherwise". So, for Wilkins, the acceptance of the reliability of our faculties is a basic assumption, on which his whole probabilistic justification of religious knowledge is based. He really does not entertain or examine what would happen if one doubted our faculties.

Joseph Glanvill, in his *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion*, saw the centrality of the acceptance of the reliability of our faculties.³⁶ He saw that ultimate scepticism can

³⁵ See Henry More, *Apocalypsis Apocalypseos, or the Revelation of St. John the Divine Enveiled* (London, 1680); and *Paralipomena Prophetica Containing Several Supplements and Defences of Dr. Henry More, His Expositions of the Prophet Daniel and the Apocalypse, Whereby the Impregnable Firmness and Solidity of the Said Expositions is Further Evidenced to the World* (London, 1685).

³⁶ John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, 1675), p. 9.

only be rejected if one can ignore the possibility of doubting our faculties. There is a kind of certainty, which he, like Wilkins, called "infallible", which would occur if we were assured that "'tis impossible things should be otherwise than we conceive or affirm of them".³⁷ This sort of certainty is beyond human attainment, "for it may not be absolutely impossible, but that our Faculties may be so contrived, as always to deceive us in the things we judge most certain and assured".³⁸ However, since we have no reason to suspect this is the case, we are conditionally certain, "But we may not say 'tis utterly impossible". Only God can have infallible certainty. We have a human certainty which is sufficient for science and religion.³⁹ In another essay, "The Agreement of Reason and Religion", Glanvill asserted that "*The belief of our Reason is an Exercise of Faith; and Faith is an Act of Reason.*"⁴⁰ We believe our reasoning comes from God. This is the basic act of faith. Then employing what we believe to be our God-given reason, we can "justify" our faith. This comfortably puts the possibility that reason can be deceptive aside, and leaves it as a purely sceptical possibility that should not bother reasonable religious people. This involves a kind of fideism, but not one that requires tremendous struggle about what to believe.

The more dramatic presentation of the possibilities that might follow from questioning our faculties appears in the French contemporary, Blaise Pascal. In one of his most forceful analyses of the foundations of knowledge and belief in *The Pensées*, in the well-known *pensée* 131-434, Pascal asserted that the strongest argument of the sceptics was that we cannot be sure of any principles apart from faith and revelation, except by some natural intuition. But this natural intuition gives us no proof of their truth, because "There is no certainty, apart from faith, as to whether man was created by a good God, an evil demon, or just by chance, and so it is a matter of doubt, depending on our origin, whether these innate principles are true, false or certain".⁴¹

³⁷ Joseph Glanvill, "Of Scepticism and Certainty", second essay in *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (London, 1676), p. 49.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, loc. cit.

⁴⁰ This is the fifth of the *Essays*, with its own pagination. The quotation is on p. 21. See also Henry van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690* (The Hague, 1963), pp. 71-89; and R. H. Popkin, "Introduction" to the photoreproduction edition of Glanvill's *Essays* (London, 1970), esp. xxii-xxvi.

⁴¹ Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, in *Oeuvres complètes* (New York and Paris, 1963), *Pensée* #131-434 (Lafuma and Brunschwig numbers), p. 514. I have used the translation of A. J. Krailsheimer (London: Penguin, 1979), p. 62.

As Pascal developed the problem, the reliability of any knowledge depended on the reliability of our faculties. And the reliability of our faculties depended upon their source. If they have been created by a good God, then we can rely on them. But, if they have been created by a demonic force, we may always be in error. And if our faculties are just the chance result of how the natural world has developed, we are uncertain as to how reliable they may be. The dogmatists can point out that we cannot actually doubt natural principles, but the sceptics can reply "that uncertainty as to our origin entails uncertainty as to our nature".⁴² And, as Pascal observed, dogmatists have been trying to answer the question about our origin ever since the world began.

However, as Pascal pointed out, nature prevented man from doubting everything, but at the same time left him unable to justify any knowledge because of our not knowing our true condition and the reliability of our faculties. "What sort of a freak then is man! How novel, how monstrous, how chaotic, how paradoxical, how prodigious. Judge of all things, feeble earthworm, repository of truth, sink of doubt and error, glory and refuse of the universe!"⁴³ We cannot even discover our true condition through natural reason, since we cannot tell what our origin is. As Pascal increased to a fever-pitch the conflict between complete doubt and the need to know, he finally offered his religious solution. "Know then, proud man, what a paradox you are to yourself. Be humble impotent reason! Be silent, feeble nature. Learn that man infinitely transcends man, hear from your master your true condition, which is unknown to you. Listen to God".⁴⁴

Presumably if one hears anything, then one can have a basis for natural knowledge grounded on revealed knowledge. Natural knowledge in mathematics and physics, areas where Pascal himself made enormous contributions, remain suspended in their truth value since one can never justify the axioms involved, or collect enough data to establish anything with certainty. Pascal's *Esprit géométrique* is probably the best analysis of what an axiom system amounts to, written before the development of modern symbolic logic. It is self-contained and its truth value depends upon that of the axioms, which, in the nature of the case, cannot be demonstrated.⁴⁵ In the preface to the treatise on the vacuum, Pascal gave as clear an analysis of the limitations of inductive reasoning as appeared before Popper's work, and

⁴² *Ibid*, p. 63, Penguin ed.; *Oeuvres*, p. 515.

⁴³ *Ibid*, p. 64, Penguin ed.; *Oeuvres*, p. 515.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, pp. 64-65, Penguin ed.; *Oeuvres*, p. 515.

⁴⁵ Blaise Pascal, "De l'esprit géométrique et de l'art de persuader", *Oeuvres*, pp. 348-59; R. H. Popkin, "Pascal", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. VI, pp. 51-55.

Pascal pointed out that all that the empirical scientist can accomplish is to falsify hypotheses, not establish them.⁴⁶

Pascal's version of "incurable" scepticism does not have the easy solution of Henry More, or his probabilistic friends, Wilkins and Glanvill. One does not move from an unresolvable doubt about the merits of our faculties, to an evaluation of what reasonable, decent Englishmen believe, within a "reasonable doubt". For Pascal, there is no human solution. Faith on man's side, and revelation from God have to meet to provide any answer. If not, man can only disintegrate into despair and hopelessness, and realize that everything he thinks he knows may just be part of the sink of uncertainty and error. With revelation, one still does not have genuinely certain knowledge as Pascal observed, "The prophecies, even the miracles and proofs of our religion, are not of such a kind that they can be said to be absolutely convincing". On the other hand, "it cannot be said to be unreasonable to believe in them. There is thus evidence and obscurity, to enlighten some and obfuscate others".(835) The evidence on each side is great enough, so that the decision to believe or not believe is not a rational decision. Disbelieving is then a matter of concupiscence and wickedness of heart. "Thus there is enough evidence to condemn and not enough to convince". Those who follow religion then "are prompted to do so by grace and not by reason, and those who evade it are prompted by concupiscence and not by reason".⁴⁷ So, for Pascal, the religious beliefs that make it possible to overcome scepticism about the reliability of our faculties is the result of divine grace, not human action. Humans can only reject or refuse. God provides the solution.

Pascal, the Jansenist, sees God's grace as the sole way of overcoming "incurable scepticism". Henry More, the Cambridge Platonist, and his Latitudinarian friends, Bishop Wilkins and Joseph Glanvill, were quasi-Pelagians. Recognizing the ultimate scepticism about our faculties, one did not have to hear God or await His or Her action. One could step back into the human world, albeit one filled with doubts, and find sufficient certainty to "justify" More's interpretation of the Book of Revelation, the new science, the existence of witches, a reasonable legal system and a reasonable Christianity. For them, the light of reason, deceptive though it might be, provided sufficient guidance.⁴⁸ Glanvill saw that accepting it was an act of faith, but

⁴⁶ Blaise Pascal, "Préface sur le traité sur le vide", *Oeuvres*, pp. 230-32.

⁴⁷ Pascal, *Pensées*, #835-564, p. 286, Penguin ed.; *Oeuvres*, p. 608.

⁴⁸ It is interesting that the first English translation of Pascal's *Pensées*, by Joseph Walker, is dedicated to Robert Boyle, a close intellectual ally of More, Wilkins,

one that quickly became reasonable as it led to evidence of God's existence and sufficient guarantees of beliefs in various areas of human concern.

At the end of the seventeenth century, another super-sceptic, Pierre Bayle, was ignoring the mitigated or limited scepticism of the English Latitudinarians, and was pushing Pascal's point beyond any way of saving reason. The public message of the *Dictionary*, defended in its appendices and in subsequent polemics against rational theologians like Jean le Clerc and Jacquelot, was "Abandon reason and accept Faith", "Faith is built on the ruins of reasons", "Away with reason, away with reason. What a wonderful grace has heaven bestowed upon you".⁴⁹

Whether Bayle was a pre-Kierkegaardian irrationalist at heart I do not know. But he set forth part of the Danish philosopher's position, part because the full version of Kierkegaard's "incurable scepticism" needed certain elements from Hume to make it complete.

Hume, as we saw at the outset, did not challenge the reliability of the rules of reason, but questioned whether we could ever be sure we had applied them correctly. This led him to point out the need to examine each application, and to examine each examination of each application, etc. This results in all knowledge resolving itself into probability and the probability diminishing each time another examination, so that "When I reflect on the natural fallibility of my judgment, I have less confidence in my opinions, than when I only the consider the objects concerning which I reason; and when I proceed still farther, to turn my scrutiny against every successive estimation I make of my faculties, all of the rules of logic require a diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence".⁵⁰

Having arrived at such a complete scepticism, Hume then denied that he was "one of those sceptics, who hold all in uncertain, and that our judgment is not in *any* thing possess of *any* measures of truth and falsehood". Nobody, Hume insisted, ever really held this view, because "Nature, by an absolute and uncontrollable necessity

and Glanvill, who shared much of their viewpoint. This would indicate that to an English reader of the time, Pascal seemed to be closer to the Latitudinarian outlook of limited certitude than to a purely fideistic one. Also, his Catholicism was ignored, though More and the others were very much opposed to the Church of Rome, the bastion of the Antichrist in their interpretation of Scripture.

⁴⁹ See Bayle's fourth clarification to the *Dictionnaire*, as well as footnote C to the article "Pyrrhon", where Pascal is discussed. The attacks on Le Clerc and Jacquelot, especially the last one, *Entretiens entre Marime et Themiste* (Rotterdam, 1707), bring this anti-rationalism out most clearly.

⁵⁰ Hume, *Treatise*, Book I, Part IV, Sec. 1, p. 183.

has determin'd us to judge as well as to breathe and feel".⁵¹ Hume then explained how nature psychologically prevented us from considering these doubts about our judgments onward and onward. Later on in evaluating what his analysis of human knowledge had shown, he observed that we only save ourselves from this total scepticism by means of a singular and trivial property of the fancy. In view of this should we reject all refined or elaborate reasoning? This would end all science and philosophy. If, to avoid this, we accept one singular quality of our imagination as what saves us from complete scepticism, we are left with no choice but betwixt a false reason or none at all.⁵² Rather than allowing this to become an "incurable scepticism" which would undermine our confidence in our faculties, Hume calmly pointed out how people get on, when they reach this point on the road to scepticism. They either ignore the point, or they forget it. Nature dispells the clouds of doubt, and leads us back to common affairs of life, where we live our lives and explore our interests without endlessly doubting. Hume could then develop his account of the moral sciences without requiring God's grace or abandoning reason. Nature provided sufficient guidance for reasonable persons to study and learn from the ordinary affairs of mankind. And so Hume, almost the super-sceptic, became one of the important social scientists of the Enlightenment.⁵³

Although Hume relied on nature saving one from scepticism or lunacy, in what is usually taken as a facetious comment in the essay "Of miracles", he pointed to what Kierkegaard was to use as his solution to "incurable scepticism". After showing how unreasonable it would be to believe in the Christian religion, Hume said that a reasonable person could only believe in it today if a miracle occurred. "Mere reason is insufficient to convince us of its veracity. And whoever is moved by *Faith* to assent to it, is conscious of a continued miracle in his own person, which subverts all of the principles of his understanding, and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience".⁵⁴

Hume may have thought this observation was the *coup de grâce* to Christianity, in pointing out that it could not be believed without this

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

⁵² *Ibid.*, "Conclusion", Book I, p. 268.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, pp. 270-73. On Hume's post-Pyrrhonian views, his social and moral political theories, see Donald Livingston, *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life* (Chicago, 1984).

⁵⁴ Hume, "Of Miracles", *Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Sec. X, Part II, p. 131.

continued miracle that undermined all reasonable thought. However, the German mystic, J. G. Hamann, as soon as he saw this, announced "There speaks the greatest voice of orthodoxy". And Kierkegaard, on learning about Hamann's commentary on Hume, made this into the theory of religious knowledge in the *Philosophical Fragments*.⁵⁵

In dealing with Kierkegaard, one always has to be on guard about how much of his view is being presented in any given volume. I think there is not much problem with his early philosophical pseudonymous author, Johannes Climacus, who discovered that all philosophizing begins in doubt, and then struggled to overcome scepticism in the *Philosophical Fragments*, written right after Kierkegaard's exposure to the current metaphysical system of Schelling in Berlin, Johannes Climacus, began with analysis of the problem of knowledge. One explanation of how we know is that offered by Plato. In Plato's theory of recollection the moment of recollecting is of no importance, nor is the occasion.

As a thought experiment, Johannes Climacus proposes to examine a theory of knowledge in which the moment and the occasion are all important. For this to be the case, the learner, prior to acquiring knowledge must (a) have been in complete ignorance, (b) not have had the capacity to recognize his or her ignorance, and (c) have had no way of overcoming this ignorance. "The seeker must be destitute of the Truth up to the very moment of his learning it; he cannot even have possessed it in the form of ignorance ... What is more, he cannot even be described as a seeker ... He must therefore be characterized as being beyond the pale of the Truth, not approaching it like a proselyte, but departing from it; or as being in Error".⁵⁶

The state of "incurable scepticism" can only be overcome if the learner is given both knowledge and the faculties, the condition necessary for understanding it. He must be made a "new creature", he must be converted from one who is in error to one who knows the Truth.⁵⁷

This transformation, in which the moment of its occurrence, and the occasion of its occurrence are to be considered all important,

⁵⁵ Johann G. Hamann said to Hume's remark, "So ist diess allemal Orthodoxie, und ein Zeugniß der Wahrheit in dem Munde eines Feindes und Verfolgers derselben". *Schriften*, ed. F. Roth (Berlin, 1821-43), Band I, p. 406. On Kierkegaard's reaction to Hamann's view, see Walter Lowrie, *Kierkegaard* (London, 1938), pp. 165-167.

⁵⁶ Søren Kierkegaard, *Philosophical Fragments, or A Fragment of Philosophy*, translated by David F. Swenson (Princeton, 1946), p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

requires that the moment be induced outside the seeker. If it is self-induced then one always had the knowledge, and this is just Plato's theory of recollection all over again. If it is not self-induced, the Teacher must be external to the seeker or learner's world. For the occasion of learning to be all important, it must occur with no continuity in the learner's life. Hence it must be a miracle, in Hume's sense, and subvert all of the person's previous custom and experience. It must be caused by a force outside of one's history—an eternal force—God.⁵⁸

The theory of knowledge developed by Johannes Climacus is a supernatural one that involves the transformation of a person's faculties and the presentation of true knowledge by miracle, by force or forces beyond normal understanding.

Kierkegaard goes beyond both Pascal and Bayle. The learner learns by grace, but by a transforming grace that gives him or her a new capacity to understand. Away with reason is replaced by a new reason, one that can accept learning by miracle. Spelled out in theological terms, learning Truth requires the encounter of God in history. One can only know that such an encounter occurs by faith. No evidence of reason or experience can show this is possible. In fact, reason and experience can show that this is impossible. So, the fundamental belief in Climacus's system is irrational in the fullest sense. It is the belief in absolute paradox, the paradox of paradoxes, that God the eternal has entered history, the temporal. Anyone who can believe this can believe anything, since the ultimate belief makes all petty difficulties vanish. The cure for incurable scepticism then requires a miracle which enables one to believe the impossible.⁵⁹

Kierkegaard's analysis of the nature of faith deserves far more exposition. For our purposes here, let us just say that it opens the door to modern irrationalism. It was intended, I believe, to show that the liberal reasonable interpretation of Judeo-Christianity as filtered through the scepticism and questioning of Enlightenment thinkers, was no longer serious religion. It was a blend of ethics with historical parables. It requires no effort to believe, because faith had disappeared. The philosophers and theologians had performed the modern miracle, they had changed wine into water. Kierkegaard saw that religion had to meet Hume's description of it, and glory in that description. It had to reject any normal evidential or rational standards,

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, chapters I and II.

⁵⁹ This is an all too brief summary of the rest of *The Philosophical Fragments*. On this see, R. H. Popkin, "Hume and Kierkegaard", in *Journal of Religion* XXXI (1951), pp. 274-81. Also in Popkin, *The Highroad to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego, 1980), pp. 227-36), and "Kierkegaard and Scepticism", in Josiah Thompson, *Kierkegaard, A Collection of Critical Essays* (New York, 1972), p. 342-372.

and rest on faith alone. If there could be evidence for faith, it would again enter the realm of the possible and the probable. The assertion that the condition for believing, and the belief had to come to us by miracle involved also excluding any other sources of justifying our faculties or our beliefs.

Kierkegaard's analysis of belief has been adopted by religious and non-religious thinkers, and is a major force in irrationalist critiques of religions and secular beliefs. Kierkegaard's impact on Neo-Orthodox Christian and Jewish theology is all too evident, as is his impact on the atheist existentialist. His extreme resolution to the "incurable scepticism" with regard to our faculties is now beginning to challenge and erode confidence in the bastion of dogmatic knowledge—modern science.

Twentieth-century scientism, as presented by the logical positivists, claimed to push aside all of the irrational and anti-rational forces, and to provide a bulwark against scepticism. Moritz Schlick saw the positivist program as the answer to Hume's scepticism with regard to reason. His answer depended on our faculties, our ability to distinguish analytic and synthetic propositions. Schlick kept approaching the problem that we could err, but then insisted that immediate consciousness was infallible on this.⁶⁰ Quine, Goodman, Putnam and others have raised severe enough questions as to whether we have any sure way of telling the analytic from the synthetic. Then what are we left with? Sciences based on empirical induction? Popper has questioned the usual positivistic formulations of this. And now, two recent challenges seem to extend incurable scepticism into this area. Paul Feyerabend's challenge that we cannot set up justifiable standards for distinguishing science from non-science, the rational from the irrational, suggests that our most rational scientific activities, based on the use of our most rational faculties, may be dubious or erroneous, has caused a fair amount of panic amongst contemporary philosophers of science. Feyerabend and his targets have pointed out that his attack leads to philosophical anarchism, a form of incurable scepticism.⁶¹

Another challenge, that of Thomas Kuhn, indicates that ideas, theories, evidence are rational and scientific in context, and that the contexts can and do change. So, what appears scientific to us to-

⁶⁰ See R. H. Popkin, "Schlick and Scepticism", in E. Gadol, ed. *Rationality and Science* (Vienna, 1982), pp. 195-209, and below pp. 254 ff.

⁶¹ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method* (London, 1975). See also David Stove, *Popper and After. Four Modern Irrationalsits* (London, 1982).

day, using our highly developed rational faculties can turn out to be unscientific at other times and in other contexts.⁶²

Thus, the incurable scepticism Hume said nobody could hold to, has been advanced by More, Pascal and Kierkegaard. It has developed from a reason for being extremely careful and cautious, to seeking God's Grace, to requiring a miracle that could make one believe in the impossible. It is no longer confined to mild theologians, to desperate theologians, to irrationalist theologians. As our age gave up any hope of grace or miracles, the legacy of the incurable scepticism was in questioning the reliability, the veracity and the rationality of science. And while science takes over our intellectual world, it is also taking over the sceptical questioning of itself.

Perhaps, as a picture of what is to come, we will have more and more debates about the sceptical implications of Feyerabend's and Kuhn's questioning, while "intelligent computers" are being made and programmed to carry on the work of the scientific world. The computers will gather the data, form hypotheses, test them, publish the results, while the war between the sceptics and the scientific dogmatists goes on. Maybe, some day in the twenty-first century, a super, super computer will question its program, its structure, its faculties, and come to complete doubt about what it is doing. Then, as Hume said, it will form an universal doubt of its former opinions and principles, but also of its faculties. It could not overcome its doubts by using its own faculties, programs, data bases, etc. And it would find that this kind of doubt were it ever possible to be attained by a computer, an artificial intelligence, would be entirely incurable. In this state no reasoning could ever bring us or our computers to a state of assurance and conviction on any subject. And this may be the world we are moving into, shorn of the optimism of the seventeenth-century scientists and theologians, the beliefs of the passionate theologians, and the optimism of the twentieth-century positivists. In exploring the pathways and by ways by which scepticism has penetrated our intellectual world since the Renaissance, we can see what has happened, and see the various ways brave thinkers have sought to deal with scepticism.

By retracing what has happened we may be able to find some ways of living with the present form of our sceptical crisis now that we are losing our innocence about our latest intellectual revolution, the new physics, the new biology, the new astronomy and the computer. Maybe each age will have to relive the sceptical crisis in order to cope

⁶² Thomas Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago, 1962).

with it. Hence the study of scepticism will be part of our on-going attempt to reconcile our ideas, our needs and our world.

XIII

SOME UNRESOLVED QUESTIONS IN THE HISTORY OF SCEPTICISM

The Role of Jewish Anti-Christian Arguments in the Rise of Scepticism with Regard to Religion

It is only fitting that I should end this memorial conference (for Charles B. Schmitt at the Warburg Institute) on the theme with which Charles Schmitt began his career as an intellectual historian—the history of modern scepticism from the Renaissance onward.

I first met Charles when he was starting to work on his dissertation on Gianfrancesco Pico. Paul Oskar Kristeller introduced us. Since then, almost thirty years ago, we discussed, debated, argued and encouraged each other in our efforts to understand how ancient scepticism was revived in the Renaissance, how it developed and how it influenced the course of modern thinking in a wide range of areas. We corresponded frequently, and met often on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. A few years ago we felt it desirable to pool our understandings about scepticism with that of other researchers working on other aspects of the subject, and so we planned the Wolfenbüttel Symposium on the history of scepticism that took place in February 1984, where we were joined by scholars working on ancient scepticism, scepticism arising in the sciences, law, medicine, late scholastic theology and Cartesianism. The results of this meeting have just appeared.¹

Charles and I felt that much had been accomplished in the sceptical reunion in Wolfenbüttel, and declared our intention to make this an on-going matter, and started planning future meetings with Professors Gregory and Dibon in Italy, and Professor Funkenstein in Israel. In our discussions prior to Charles's untimely death, we tossed around two topics which we felt left much to be explored and explained in future conferences—(1) why ancient scepticism differed so drastically in its effect on people from the effects of modern scepticism, and (2) how and why scepticism which seems to have involved a defense of

¹ The volume, *Scepticism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, edited by R. H. Popkin and Charles B. Schmitt, Wolfenbüttel Forschungen, Band 35, (Wiesbaden, 1987).

established religion, by custom or faith, became the enemy of religion in the Enlightenment and after.

Myles Burnyeat and others have made much progress in delineating the character of ancient scepticism, and have portrayed it as a therapy for relieving people of anxieties about knowledge problems. Sextus described himself as a physician treating a disease "dogmatism" or "rashness", by getting the patient to suspend judgment, withhold assent, and thereby achieve *ataraxia*. In contrast, every presentation of scepticism from Montaigne to Camus, is set forth as a terrifying picture of the human predicament. The Sextus patient is a "laid-back" Californian, a Reagan looking happy at an unintelligible, maybe hostile world. The modern sceptic, Pascal or Hume, is frantic, living a nightmare, searching desperately for truth and reality.

Why the great difference? When I asked Myles Burnyeat, he said it was my problem to find the answer, not his.² In discussions with Charles and others, I have been groping towards a tentative answer which involves the tenor of sceptical problems when put in a serious religious or ideological belief context. This may help explain the four-century-long struggle with scepticism that has been one of the motivating forces in the development of modern philosophy, and may account for the present turn by many to irrationalist and fundamentalist views accepted without question. There is much to be thought through on this front, and I hope others besides myself will help try to grapple with this.

Much more progress seems to be occurring with regard to the second question—how scepticism turned from friend to foe of religion between the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. The research on the development of Biblical criticism and pre-Adamism is revealing how some of the sceptical ways of accepting Judeo-Christianity became eroded. I have put forth what I have to say on this in my researches on Isaac La Peyrère, and his influence.³ The prodigious researches of our Italian colleagues is unearthing the history of the hidden, clandestine documents, especially Bruno's *Triumphant Beast*, Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*, *Les Trois Imposteurs*, and the

² This exchange occurred at the symposium at Wolfenbüttel in 1984. I tried to sketch out an answer in the comments I made at the American Philosophical Association meeting in New York, Dec. 1987, to Julia Annas's paper on ancient and modern scepticism. [This appears in this volume as "Scepticism Old and New" below, pp. 236 ff.]

³ See my *Isaac La Peyrère, His Life, His Thought and His Influence*, (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987).

Theophrastus Redivivus.⁴ When the origin, *fortuna* and dispersion of these documents is more completely known, we may be able to see who they affected and what role they played in the change of the acceptance of traditional belief.

The history of the composition and diffusion of J.P. Marana's *Memoirs of a Turkish Spy, hidden in Paris for forty-five years*, may help explain the spread of sceptical ideas about religion. The first two, of the eight volumes of the *Turkish Spy*, we now know, were composed in Italian in the late 17th century, and published in French. The next six volumes, with the greater amount of sceptical ammunition, appeared first in English, then in French, German, Dutch and even Russian. There were at least 30 English editions.⁵ Who wrote them and who read them? During the hundred years in which it was a best-seller, it apparently established a new perspective—seeing European beliefs from outside the culture, and measuring them by information from Oriental sources with very sceptical results with regard to Judaism, many kinds of Protestantism and Catholicism.⁶ The sceptical material fused with some of that of the English deists (who may have written the later volumes) and led to the cultural relativism of the *Lettres persannes*, the *Lettres chinoises*, etc.

In the brief time I have to discuss this huge problem of scepticism versus religion, I would like to describe a line of my present research which I think may prove rewarding in revealing a thread that helped unravel the acceptance of Judeo-Christianity, and led to questioning it in a direct, forceful manner, that helped destroy confidence in tradi-

⁴ See the editions and studies on these topics by Tullio Gregory, Canziani, Paganini, Silvia Berti, among others.

⁵ On what is known about the composition of *The Turkish Spy*, see Guido Almansi, "L'Esploratore turco' e la genesi del romanzo apistolare pseudo-orientale", *Studi secenteschi*, VII (1966), pp. 35-65; C. J. Betts, *Early Deism in France* (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1984), chap. 7; the edition of J. P. Marana, selected by Arthur Weitzman, (London: Routledge, Kegan Paul, 1970); and R. H. Popkin, "Two Unused Sources about Sabbatai Zevi", *Dutch Jewish History*, ed. J. Michman (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989).

See the list of English editions in Weitzman, *op. cit.* The Bibliothèque Nationale, British Library, University of Amsterdam libraries have a great many editions. UCLA has a microfilm of the Russian edition prepared under Catherine the Great.

⁶ Betts repeats the contention that *The Turkish Spy* is the model for later works such as *Les Lettres persanes*, *Les Lettres chinoises*, *Les Lettres juives*, etc. Cf. Betts, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99.

tional religion—this scepticism that resulted in the Jewish challenge to Christianity from Bodin to Orobio de Castro.⁷

There had been debates ad nauseam in the middle ages to convert the Jews to Christianity. These debates were coercive and downright dangerous to the Jewish participants who tried to avoid debating, claiming at Tortosa in Spain in 1415 that they did not know about syllogisms and hence could not debate.⁸

In the period of the 15th to 17th centuries two factors drastically changed the character of the debates. From the Christian side there was a sense of immediacy. The Jews had to be converted as the penultimate event before the Second Coming of Jesus and the onset of the Millennium. Saint Vincent Ferrar, Savonarola, and legions of Protestants saw the need to convince the Jews immediately, and some rather drastic measures were taken, especially in Spain and Portugal.⁹ From the Jewish side a new possibility emerged—that one could fight back intellectually without too much fear of punishment—one could actually set out reasons why one did not believe in Christianity. And some of the best anti-Christian arguers, who had been forced converts, had scholastic training and humanist training. They now knew about syllogisms, and about humanist criticism, and could put the traditional Jewish reason for rejecting Christianity in terms of powerful objections to Christian claims. Signs that this was becoming effective appear in worries in England in 1656 (the predicted year of the conversion of the Jews) that either all Jews will become Christians, or all Christians will become Jews,¹⁰ and in Jacques Basnage's despairing concluding remarks in his *Histoire des Juifs* when he surveyed the course of 17th-century debates, and observed the Jews usually won because they knew the material better and had better arguments. He

⁷ In sketching this out, I feel Charles Schmitt's slightly bemused scepticism—Popkin is dragging in the Jewish element again—but since I think that I convinced him that there is such an element to be reckoned with, which was of some importance, I think he would allow me my Jewish perspective as a way of throwing new light on old problems.

⁸ See the articles on medieval disputations, and on the Tortosa affair in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 6, pp. 79-103, and Vol. 15, pp. 1270-1272.

⁹ See Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, 2nd edition (New York: Harper, 1961); Yitzhak Baer, *The Jews in Christian Spain*, Vol. II (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1961); and Cecil Roth, *A History of the Marranos* (New York: Meridian, 1974.)

¹⁰ On these English concerns, see David S. Katz, *Philo-Semitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), especially chapters 3, 5 and 6; and Christopher Hill, "Till the Conversions of the Jews", in *The Collected Essays of Christopher Hill*, Vol. II (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1965), pp. 269-300.

advised giving up debating (after the Orobio-Van Limborch debate of 1687¹¹ and leaving it to God to convert the Jews.¹² In the late 18th century, Rousseau suggested that the Jews must have good arguments for not becoming Christians, but they aren't given the chance to express them.¹³ A Dutch society in 1782 offered Jews a prize for giving their arguments. Zalkind Hourwitz, a royal librarian of Louis XVI, sent in his arguments, and kept demanding his prize, since the society found no way of answering him.¹⁴ Moses Mendelssohn, who was being pressured to convert by the Swiss physiologist, Lavater, threatened to publish his objections against Christianity. This led Lessing, Kant and Herder to support Mendelssohn's refusal to convert.¹⁵

In the course of the 16th and 17th centuries, Catholic and Protestant philo-semites thought that by making Jews more aware of their beliefs, and in John Dury's phrase, "making Christianity less offensive to the Jews",¹⁶ the Jews would convert. So, a great deal of collaboration occurred in editing, annotating, explaining and publishing Jewish non-Biblical texts, such as the Talmud, the Mishna, the Zohar, the Lurianic Kabbalistic works, etc. Rabbis and Christian Hebraists worked together editing these works in Hebrew, Latin and Spanish.¹⁷

¹¹ The Orobio-Van Limborch debate appears in Philip van Limborch, *Amico Colatio cum erudito Judaeo* (Gouda, 1687). On this work, see Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Life and Work of Orobio de Castro* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); and P. T. van Rooden and J. W. Wesselius, "The early Enlightenment and Judaism: the 'Civil dispute' between Phillipus van Limborch and Orobio de Castro", *Studia Rosenthaliana*, XXI (1987), pp. 140-153.

¹² Jacques Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Tome IX, 3rd Part, vol. 15, (La Haye 1716), chap. xxxix, "Diverses remarques sur la Conversion des Juifs, & les Miracles qu'on a suivi our y parvenir".

¹³ Cited in Zalkind Hourwitz, *Apologie des Juifs*, (Paris, 1789), p. 30.

¹⁴ Hourwitz, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-32.

¹⁵ On the Lavater-Mendelssohn affair, see Alexander Altmann, *Moses Mendelssohn, A Biographical Study* (University, Alabama: Alabama University Press, 1973), chap. 3.

¹⁶ John Dury [and Samuel Hartlib?] *Englands Thankfulness, or An Humble Remembrance presented to the Committee for Religion in the High Court of Parliament* (London, 1642). This rare pamphlet is reprinted in Charles Webster, *Samuel Hartlib and the Advancement of Learning* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 90-97. The reference to making Christianity less offensive to the Jews is on p. 95.

¹⁷ See R. H. Popkin, "Some Aspects of Jewish-Christian Theological Interchanges in Holland and England, 1640-1700", in J. van den Berg and E. G. E. van der Wall, editors, *Jewish-Christian Relations* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Publishing, 1988); Allison Coudert, "A Cambridge Platonist's Kabbalist Nightmare", *Journal of the History of Ideas*, XXXV (1975), esp. 635-645 on the preparation of the *Kabbala Denudata*;

This increase in knowledge about what the Jews believed seems to have led to few conversions of Jews, but did lead to reinforcing Jewish objections, and to raising doubts among some Christians.

Two kinds of documents that seem to have had great effect are of interest—one the Bodin dialogues, the other, the anti-Christian polemics written mainly in Amsterdam. Bodin's *Heptaplomeres* was probably written late in the author's life. It displays a great deal of Jewish learning. It is a dialogue between Christians, a Moslem, a Jew, a pagan, and a naturalist, and the Jew wins the argument about which is the true religion.¹⁸ Bodin was suspected of heresy by Protestants and Catholics, and was denounced as a Jew or a Judaizer in the late 16th century.¹⁹ At this point the dialogues were not known. They were unpublished, and first were mentioned in the 1630's when Hugo Grotius obtained a copy. In the 1650's Queen Christina was seeking a copy, and the Bodin heirs found a copy. They disputed who had the right to it, and brought the case before a judge, Henri de Mesmes, who took the copy home and copied it.²⁰ Then an explosion of copies occurred, derivative from Mesmes's copy. Henry Oldenburg copied it (this is probably the source of John Milton's copy), which passed into Germany.²¹ All sorts of Parisian free-thinkers copied it, and Queen Christina obtained a copy. In Wolfenbüttel, Leibniz, Thoma-

David S. Katz, 'The Abendana Brothers and the Christian Hebraists of Seventeenth Century England', *Jrnl. Eccl. Hist.*, (1989), and Gershom Scholem, art. "Knorr von Rosenroth, Christian", in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*.

¹⁸ See the recent English and French editions of Bodin's dialogues, *Colloquium of the Seven about Secrets of the Sublime*, translated with introduction and annotation by Marion D. L. Kuntz, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975), and *Colloque entre sept scavans qui sont de differens sentiments*, edited by François Berriot, (Geneva, 1984).

¹⁹ Cf. the prefatory material to the manuscript copy of Bodin's *Heptaplomeres*, Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, Ms. Helmsted 924, fols. 2v-6v. The material is drawn from papers of Gui Patin and Gabriel Naudé, and letters of Jean Chapelain to Herman Conring. A lot of the material was published in Polycarp Leyser, *Apparatus Literis*, Collectio Prima (Wittenberg, 1717), pp. 66-79, on the possibility that Bodin was Jewish. Some of this appears in Berriot's preface to the French edition of the *Heptaplomeres*, pp. XXIV ff. See also, Pierre Bayle, "Bodin", Rem. O. in his *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.

²⁰ This story appears in the Ms. Helmsted 924, fol. 2; Polycarp Leyser, *op. cit.*, pp. 71-72; Robert Neumann, "Zur Geschichte des ungedruckten Werke: *Colloquium heptaplomeres*", *Serapeum* I (1840), pp. 116 and 132; and Berriot's preface.

On Christina's attempt to obtain a copy, see Paul Colomesnis, *Gallia Orientalis* (The Hague, 1665); and Berriot's preface, pp. XXVII and XXIX. An incomplete copy is in Christina's library in the Vatican collection, Ms. Regin. Latin 1313.

²¹ R. H. Popkin, "Could Spinoza have known Bodin's *Colloquium Heptaplomeres*", *Philosophia* XVI (1986), pp. 307-314, and "The Dispersion of Bodin's Dialogues in

sus and Conring were preparing an accurate copy for publication.²² The correspondence of Conring and Jean Chapelain, which is copied in one of the three Wolfenbüttel manuscripts of Bodin's opus, indicates that Chapelain was amazed that a copy had gotten to Lower Saxony. Conring gave its source as the de Mesmes copy.²³ The recent French edition of Bodin's *Heptaplomeres* lists the presently known copies, and makes clear that copies were sent all over Germany, to Vienna, all over France, but none to Holland.²⁴ Oldenburg's copy (not on the list) led Oldenburg to urge the Dutch Collegiant leader, Adam Boreel, to write a refutation of it, so he may have sent a copy to Holland for this purpose.²⁵ Boreel's refutation exists in manuscript form at the Royal Society. Henry More knew of it through Francis Mercurius van Helmont, who had a copy.²⁶

So, Bodin's *Heptaplomeres* provided a great deal of questioning of Christianity from a Jewish perspective. Oldenburg said that the work was unpublishable because it was so offensive to Christianity, and it was in fact not published until 1841.²⁷

Another, and probably more potent source of doubts about Christianity came from the Jewish polemics written mainly in Amsterdam. Bodin challenged Christianity from his grave. The Amsterdam

England, Holland and Germany", *Journal of the History of Ideas* XLIX (1988), pp. 157-160.

²² See Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, mss. Extrav. 89.1 and Extrav. 220.2. The first is a very clear manuscript, apparently prepared for publication, with corrections by Leibniz, Conring, Thomasius and others. The second is a messier text with the same materials. Both are listed as prepared by Polycarp Leyser, Professor at Helmsted, 1727.

²³ Ms. Helmsted 924, fol. 5r, Jean Chapelain to Hermann Conring, Paris, July 1673. "Je n'eusse pas creu que hors de Paris il y eut encore une exemplaire de l'Eptaplomeres de Bodin, mais puisque vous l'aves entre vos Ms. vous le pouver regarder comme un trésor de moins en rareté".

²⁴ See the French edition, "Répertoire des copies manuscrites du *Colloquium heptaplomeres* ou Colleque des secrets cachez", pp. LI-LX. There is a manuscript in the Royal Library in The Hague, but it is from the 18th century.

²⁵ Henry Oldenburg to Samuel Hartlib, Paris, 27 August 1659, in *The Correspondence of Henry Oldenburg*, edited and translated by A. Rupert Hall and Marie Boas Hall, Vol. I, (Madison and Milwaukee, 1961), p. 307. See also, Popkin, "Could Spinoza have known Bodin's Colloquium?", note 13.

²⁶ The refutations, entitled *Jesus Nazarenus Legislator*, is Vols. 12, 13 and 15 of the Robert Boyle papers at the Royal Society. The text is disordered. Henry More mentions using Boreel's work that he learned of from Van Helmont. See More's *Theological Works* (London, 1708), preface, pp. iv-v.

²⁷ Oldenburg's letter to Hartlib, Aug. 27, 1659, p. 306. The first publication, much abridged, was in 1841, and the first complete edition was by Ludovicus Noack, (Schwein, 1857).

group did it while alive, but did not publish their works. The earliest ones are by Elijah de Montalto, Queen Marie de Medici's physician, who died in 1616. He wrote both to encourage forced converts, Marranos, not to become real Christians, and to answer claims of Christianity. When he became the royal physician he demanded the right to practice and advocate his religion. He debated with priests in France, and his version of the debates was copied and circulated amongst Jews in Holland, France, England and colonial America.²⁸ Montalto was buried in Holland by his secretary, Saul Levi Mortera, who became chief rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese Synagogue, and is reported to have been the active force behind Spinoza's excommunication. Mortera wrote up debates he had had with a priest in Rouen, and wrote large works showing that in spite of all of the Christian claims to the contrary, God is on the side of the Jews. Mortera marshalled many Christian sources, Catholic scholastic and Protestant, to buttress his Jewish rejection of Christianity.²⁹ Mortera's manuscripts in many copies exist in collections all over Europe, Israel and America.³⁰ Quite a few others in the Amsterdam community wrote and argued against Christianity. But the most important was Isaac Orobio de Castro, who had been a royal physician in Spain and a scholar of philosophy. He was arrested by the Inquisition for secretly practicing Judaism and was tortured and incarcerated for three years. When released, he escaped and became a professor in the Medical School of the University of Toulouse. He later moved on to Amsterdam where he could officially practice Judaism. He circumcized himself, and became an important doctor, philosopher and theologian. He wrote against Jewish heretics such as Juan de Prado and Benedictus de Spinoza, and wrote a very great deal against Christianity.³¹ Both his and Mortera's works were often elegantly prepared as

²⁸ On Montalto, see Cecil Roth, *A History of the Jews in Venice*, (Philadelphia: Jewish Publications Society, 1930), pp. 242-244. Manuscript copies of his writings are in Amsterdam (in the Ets Haim and Rosenthaliana collections), in Paris in the Bibliothèque Nationale, in London in the British Library, as well as in New York, at Columbia University and the Jewish Theological Seminary.

²⁹ On Mortera's career, see his article in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. XII, p. 357; and Herman P. Salomon, "Inleiding" to his facsimile edition of Mortera's *Tratado da Verdade da Lei de Moises* (Braga, 1988), pp. XXXI-LX.

³⁰ There are many copies in The Netherlands, in libraries in France, England, Spain, Portugal, as well as in the United States. There is a manuscript of some of his sermons at UCLA.

³¹ On Orobio, see I. S. Révah, *Spinoza et Juan de Prado*, (Paris: Mouton, 1959); Yosef Kaplan, *From Christianity to Judaism. The Life and Work of Orobio de*

manuscripts, sometimes with pictorial illustrations.³² On the fly-leaf of one manuscript, Orobio said that he did not publish it for fear of causing scandal, but he send it to the Jesuits in Brussels who like it very much.³³ In 1687 Orobio publicly debated the Remonstrant theologian, Philip van Limborch, on the subject of the truth of the Christian religion. John Locke was apparently present, and wrote a long review of the episode.³⁴ Van Limborch published the debate with the claim that he had won. He added to it the first printing of Uriel da Costa's alleged autobiography, suggesting that Judaism led to religious scepticism.³⁵ Da Costa had claimed, after his second excommunication from the Amsterdam synagogue, that all religions were man-made and urged that one not be a Jew or a Christian—that one just be a man.³⁶

Locke was amazed at Orobio's audacious arguments as well as his expression of religious relativism.³⁷

Castro; and R. H. Popkin, "Isaac Orobio de Castro", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Vol. 5, pp. 552-553, and *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 12, pp. 1475-1477.

³² See copies in the Ets Haim collection, such as Hs. 48 C21, 48 B 13, 49 A 16 and 48 B 16. The manuscripts are listed and described in L. Fuks and G. Fuks-Mansfeld, *Hebrew and Judaic Manuscripts in Amsterdam Public Collections*, Vol. II, Catalogue of Manuscripts of Ets Haim (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1975), pp. 91-126. These manuscripts are presently in the National Library of Israel.

³³ Ets Haim Hs. 48 E 42. The original Portuguese text appears in the entry in the Fuks, Fuks-Mansfeld catalogue.

³⁴ See the correspondence of Locke and Van Limborch about the debate in *The Correspondence of John Locke*, edited by E. S. De Beer, Vol. III (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), letters number 958, 959, 963 and 964, pp. 258-261, and 268-272. The letters are all from September 1687, when the debate was published. There is some question as to whether Locke wrote the long review in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, Vol. VII (1687), pp. 289-330. In a set of the journal that belonged to Robert Shackleton of Oxford, I saw marks, made by either Locke or LeClerc, indicating which reviews were by Locke. Such a mark appeared at the head of the Orobio-Limborch debate review.

³⁵ Uriel Da Costa, *Exemplar humanae vitae*, first published in 1687 as an appendix to the Orobio-Van Limborch debate.

There is some question as to whether the autobiography is genuine. it does not correspond to some of the facts in Da Costa's life, and it omits large parts of his life. The published text is from a manuscript that belonged to Van Limborch's father-in-law, and is neither in Da Costa's hand, nor continuous.

On Da Costa, see my article on him in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. 5, pp. 987-989, and the bibliography listed there.

³⁶ Uriel da Costa, *A Specimen of a Human Life* (New York: Bergman, 1967), p. 43.

³⁷ See the review in the *Bibliothèque Universelle*, Vol. VII (1687), pp. 289-330. See also van Rooden and Wesselius, "The early Enlightenment and Judaism: the 'Civil

It was known or rumored that stronger arguments by Orobio, Mortera and others existed, but Christians could not obtain copies of the works (except for the Jesuits in Brussels). Anthony Collins complained that he could not obtain a copy of Mortera's anti-Christian work.³⁸ Recently I found how and when, but not why, the Amsterdam documents began to pass into the general Christian world.

Before I get to this, let me mention two other relevant items in this tale. In a letter I recently found, the Millenarian John Dury, who was Oldenburg's father-in-law and Robert Boyle's uncle, told a friend in 1666 that he had just had the following news from Amsterdam, (1) that the king of the Jews had arrived, and (2) that someone had published a book arguing that Scripture should be interpreted by philosophy. The second refers to the Louis Meyer-Spinoza theory of rational Bible interpretation, and the first to the Jewish Messianic movement of Sabbatai Zevi.³⁹

Dury ruminated about the sceptical implications regarding central Judeo-Christian doctrines if philosophy were taken as the rule of Scripture. He kept worrying about this point, and how to avoid this kind of scepticism, until he wrote his penultimate work, *The Apocalypse interpreted by itself*.⁴⁰ Pierre Bayle had described this work as the lunatic end of Millenarianism. Bayle's description of the book seemed so bizarre, that people have doubted that the work really existed. It does. I have located a copy of it, and it is not as bad as Bayle said.⁴¹ It does, however, represent what happens if Bible interpretation and exegesis are devoid of any rational framework.⁴² Spinoza had claimed that two kinds of scepticism about religion could result—one

dispute' between Philip van Limborch and Isaac Orobio de Castro (1687)", for a discussion of the arguments.

³⁸ Anthony Collins, *A Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons of the Christian Religion* (London, 1724), pp. 82n-83n.

³⁹ John Dury to Johann Ulrich, 25 January 1665/6, Staats Archiv, Zurich, Ms. E. II. 457e, fol. 747.

⁴⁰ John Dury, *Touchant l'Intelligence de l'Apocalypse par l'Apocalypse mesme* (Kassel, 1674).

On Dury's views late in his life, see R. H. Popkin, "The End of the Career of a Great 17th-Century Millenarian: John Dury", *Pietismus und Neuzeit*, Band 14, (1988), pp. 203-220.

⁴¹ Bayle's article "Ferry, Paul", Rem. F. in *Dictionnaire*. A copy of Dury's work is in the Herzog August Bibliothek, Wolfenbüttel, shelf number Td. 86. It is catalogued under "Duré, Jean".

⁴² Dury's final position was a kind of quietism and pietism, insisting on the moral content of religion revealed by God, without any particular doctrines. He had been rejected by most of the established religious organizations in his last years. For details see my paper, "The End of the Career of a Great Millenarian".

from trying to make the Bible rational; the other from divorcing religion from any rational base.⁴³

The appearance in 1666 of the Jewish Messianic figure, Sabbatai Zevi, caused another kind of religious scepticism. Sabbatai Zevi was accepted as the Messiah by more than 90% of the Jews of the time, and by some Millenarian Christians. However, a year after he had proclaimed the beginning of the Messianic age, Sabbatai Zevi became a Moslem.⁴⁴ Most of his followers were crushed, though some Jewish and Christian ones still accepted him, and there is still a surviving group awaiting his second coming.⁴⁵ The strange events of his career led some Christians to insist that the Jews had no criterion for telling a true Messiah from a false one—hence they should accept the Christian Messiah.⁴⁶ Others, like Voltaire, pointed out that if Sabbatai Zevi could be a false messiah or an impostor, so could others.⁴⁷ And, if the Christian criterion is taken from the Jewish sources, and if the Jews cannot use these sources correctly, why are we so sure that Christians can do any better? The number of times the Sabbatai Zevi case is discussed, and the stream of subsequent Messianic claimants, induced a fair amount of scepticism about whether anyone now or ever was or will be the Messiah.

The Jewish arguments to show the Christians were wrong provided another arsenal of the Enlightenment. These arguments were slightly known—one scholar at Leiden apparently had a manuscript of one of Elijah Montalto's tracts.⁴⁸ The Jesuits in Brussels had read Orobio.⁴⁹ Menasseh ben Israel passed on a couple of anti-Christian polemics to Ralph Cudworth, when Menasseh was in England.⁵⁰ Anthony Collins

⁴³ Spinoza, *Tractatus*, first paragraph of chap. xv.

⁴⁴ On Sabbatai Zevi, see Gershom Scholem, *Sabbatai Zevi, The Mystical Messiah* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973).

⁴⁵ See Gershom Scholem's article on the Doenmeh in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Vol. VI, pp. 148-151.

On the Christian followers, see Michael McKeon, "Sabbatai Zevi in England", *Association of Jewish Studies Review* I (1976), pp. 131-169; and Ernestine G. E. van der Wall, *De Mystieke Chiliasmus Petrus Serrarius (1600-1669) en zijn Wereld* (Leiden, 1987), chap. X.

⁴⁶ Charles Leslie, *A Short and Easy Method with the Jews*, in *Theological Works* (London, 1721), Vol. I, p. 52.

⁴⁷ See Voltaire's article, "Messie" in the *Dictionnaire philosophique*.

⁴⁸ Van Rooden, in *Constantin L'Empereur 1591-1648* (Leiden, 1985), pp. 186-187, indicated that Constantin L'Empereur, professor of Hebrew and Theology at Leiden, had seen some of Montalto's writings.

⁴⁹ See note 33.

⁵⁰ This is discussed in Richard Kidder, *A Demonstration of the Messias, in which the Truth of the Christian Religion is proved especially against the Jews*, 3 vols.,

had heard about Mortera's arguments.⁵¹ Part of Orobio's answer to Christianity came out in his debate with Philip van Limborch. But the thoroughgoing attack on Christianity became clear and passed into general European information when a treasure trove of Amsterdam Jewish manuscripts entered Christian hands.

In 1715 Jacques Basnage, in his last edition of his *Histoire des Juifs* explained the need for another edition of his book because he had suddenly come into possession of manuscripts hitherto unknown to Christian scholars, by Montalto, Orobio, Mortera, Judah Leon and others. He cited them from something called the *Biblioteca Sarraziana*.⁵² For some time I searched for such a library. Finally, with much help, I found that it was the library of his son-in-law, Sarraz, the private secretary of the Elector of Saxony, who was also the king of Poland. Sarraz sold his library at auction in September 1715 in The Hague, and the *Biblioteca Sarraziana* is the catalogue of the auction sale, about 800 pages long.⁵³ It lists as one of its treasures these Jewish manuscripts from Amsterdam that had never been available before. (There is no information on how or when Sarraz obtained them.)⁵⁴ The copies of the auction catalogue at Wolfenbüttel, Oxford, The Hague and Harvard, list the prices paid. Some of the Jewish manuscripts fetched great sums. It is not yet possible to tell who bought them, but soon the Duke of Sussex owned a copy of Mortera's chief work, Baron d'Holbach published, as part of his anti-Christian campaign, a portion of Orobio's work, entitled *Israel vengé*.⁵⁵ Ham-

(London, 1684-1700), Vol. II, pp. A4-A4v, and Vol. III, pp. iii-iv. In the preface to the 1743 edition of Ralph Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*, a letter of Cudworth's to Thurloe in 1658, p. x, described his outraged reaction to the manuscripts he received from Menasseh.

⁵¹ See note 38.

⁵² Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs* (La Haye, 1716), preface, Tome I, pp. xlvii and lxxiii, and Tome XV, chaps xxxvi and xxxvii.

⁵³ *Biblioteca Sarraziana distrahenda per Abr. de Hondt et H. Scheureler. Bibliop. Ad 16 diem Septb. 1715* (The Hague, 1715). For further details, see R. H. Popkin, "Jacques Basnage's *Histoire des Juifs* and the *Biblioteca Sarraziana*", *Studia Rosenthaliana* XXI (1987), pp. 154-162.

⁵⁴ Gerald Cerny, in *Theology, Politics and Letters at the Crossroads of European Civilization: Jacques Basnage and the Baylean Huguenot Refugees in the Dutch Republic* (The Hague, 1987), p. 177, note 303, suggests that the library that was being sold was part of Basnage's. The Jewish manuscripts, however, were not known to Basnage until 1715. See my article, "Basnage and the *Biblioteca Sarraziana*", pp. 154-156.

⁵⁵ Cf. *The Biblioteca Sussejana* (London, 1827), which lists *Obras de Senor Hamham Saul Levy Mortera*. Popkin, in "Basnage and the *Biblioteca Sarraziana*", p. 160 and note 40, suggests this may be the same manuscript that Basnage used.

burg University apparently had some of the items in the mid-19th century.⁵⁶

The radical Enlightenment bolstered its sceptical attack on Christianity by using the anti-Christian Jewish polemics. As an example of the effect the material had, a preacher who had studied at Harvard, George Bethune English, found some of the manuscripts in the Harvard Library. He studied them and then took them to Rabbi Gershom Seixas in New York in order to discuss the points at issue. The Reverend English returned to Boston and published a disproof of Christianity. He was immediately fired from his post, and went to Egypt and put on a fez.⁵⁷

The 17th-century Jewish critique of Christianity became part of the scepticism against religion of the Enlightenment. The absorption of some of the points in this critique led to eliminating supernatural aspects of Christianity and Judaism, leaving religion as ethics. As Zalkind Hourwitz, the royal librarian of the Oriental collection at Paris at the time of the Revolution said, one either has to give up Christian claims of superiority over the Jews, or one furnishes victorious arms to Pyrrhonism and irreligion.⁵⁸ Either one accepts Jewish history shorn of the supernatural, or one has only deism or atheism. Even Tom Paine claimed he was saving what was good in religion with his deistic theophilanthropy opposed to the atheism of the Reign of Terror.⁵⁹

If the Jewish anti-Christian literature and its effects are part of the story of how scepticism turned from friend to foe of religion, this has to be related with the development of clandestine ideas and literature, with the history and effect of Bodin's dialogues, of *Les Trois Imposteurs*, of the *Theophrastus Redivivus*, of the impact of the deists, and so on. Perhaps when we put the pieces together we will understand the amazing change that took place over two hundred years in the role of scepticism with regard to religion, and perhaps fathom why it happened. At the end of the 18th century a book was

Baron d'Holbach published *Israel vengé* in 1770. It is a translation of part of Orobio's text.

⁵⁶ Cf. Popkin, "Basnage and the *Biblioteca Sarraziana*", p. 159.

⁵⁷ George Bethune English, 1787-1828, had been a librarian and had studied theology at Harvard. He found some of the Amsterdam Jewish polemics in the basement of the Harvard Library. The anti-Christian arguments led him to give up Christianity. See his *The Grounds of Christianity Examined by Comparing the New Testament with the Old* (Boston, 1813).

⁵⁸ Zalkind Hourwitz, *Apologie des Juifs*, p. 59.

⁵⁹ Tom Paine, *The Age of Reason* in *The Writings*, edited by Moncure Daniel Conway (New York, 1894-1896), Vol. IV, p. 205.

written called *The Age of Revelation* as the answer to Tom Paine's *The Age of Reason*.⁶⁰ But for the philosophers it was the latter who had won. Kant was writing on religion within the limits of bare reason alone, and Fichte on the critique of all possible revelations. The view that all religions were man-made was becoming the new humanism of Lessing and Feuerbach.⁶¹

Scepticism was first transformed in the Renaissance and the Reformation from a cure to mental anxiety into a cause of modern *Angst*, and then in the next several decades from a conformist or fideist support of religion to its fiercest enemy. In understanding modern scepticism, I think we should try to understand these changes. We have many clues, lots of data, maybe too many out-moded theories based on inadequate knowledge of the history of scepticism.

Charles and I felt much intellectual energy should be devoted to resolving these problems about the role of modern scepticism. Perhaps after a few more symposia on the history of scepticism, scholars will be in a much better position to adjudge how our intellectual-religious and irreligious world developed.⁶²

Charles has left us a great legacy in his basic work on the history of philosophy, in his careful unearthing and evaluation of texts. This part of his work should be built up, so that we can profit from his labors, and better understand our situation. For me, it has been a great privilege and pleasure to have worked so long with Charles on these sceptical themes, and I feel that as I pursue the leads I am now working on, I will continue to be his partner or co-worker in understanding the making of the modern mind. Let us profit both from his knowledge and from his critical, often cynical or sceptical attitudes and carry on researches he would have enjoyed and might have joined us in.

⁶⁰ Elias Boudinot, *The Age of Revelation, or the Age of Reason shown to be an Age of Infidelity* (Philadelphia, 1801). Cf. R. H. Popkin, "The Age of Reason versus *The Age of Revelation*: Two Critics of Tom Paine: David Levi and Elias Boudinot", in J. A. Leo Lemay, editor, *Deism, Masonry and the Enlightenment, Essays Honoring Alfred Owen Aldridge* (Newark, Delaware: University of Delaware Press, 1987), pp. 158-170.

⁶¹ There is a recent study on the philosophical development of atheism by Michael J. Buckley, *At the Origins of Modern Atheism* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987). See also my review of this work in the *American Historical Review*.

⁶² There was a meeting in 1990 at the Netherlands Institute for Advanced Studies, and another is presently under discussion.

XIV

SCEPTICISM, OLD AND NEW*

There is currently a great deal of discussion about the differences between ancient and modern scepticism, especially among scholars of ancient Pyrrhonism and Academic scepticism. As a scholar of modern scepticism, I have been concerned for quite a while about the problem of understanding and assessing the difference between the scepticism of the ancient world and that that emerged in the Renaissance and the Reformation. That there are differences, and important differences, I think is obvious. The argumentation is pretty much the same. Most of the modern arguments can be traced to arguments in Sextus Empiricus or Cicero, with, perhaps, some modern nuances due to the modern formulations of dogmatic philosophies.

However, it seems fairly evident that the difference shows itself in the analyses and accounts of values of ancient Pyrrhonian and Academic sceptics and modern ones from Montaigne to Charron to Pascal to Bayle to Huet to Hume. Julia Annas portrays the difference between modern and ancient scepticism as the result of how the modern sceptics “insulate their sceptical reasoning and its consequences from everyday life” [the citations of her views are from her presentation at the American Philosophical Association in New York, Dec. 1987]. To some extent I agree with this diagnosis, but to a larger extent I do not, because I think that in the modern sceptical tradition from Montaigne to Hume there is an ethical, a moral, a value concern, that is central, and which is for these authors of crucial concern in ordinary life. Hume’s contribution may be seen as ending the religious bent of this concern, and turning it into a purely natural one. In so doing, Hume did not stop worrying about moral actions. He stopped looking for certain kinds of warrants, and substituted others. Hence the difference between his views and those of Sextus reveals a quite different kind of scepticism about moral reasoning than what some present day interpreters stress.

* A lecture given at the Institute for the Study of the History of Philosophy at the University of Mexico, and at the Twelfth Inter-American Philosophical Congress in Buenos Aires, July 1989.

To begin an examination of this, we first need to be clear about what is meant by "modern scepticism". Some of the present day discussion is about ethical sceptics and ethical relativists of the last decade. In this paper I shall refer mostly to those questioning knowledge claims and criteria of "true knowledge", writing in the period between Erasmus and Hume. As I have indicated in my studies on the history of modern scepticism, these thinkers form a continuous group, dealing with similar questions and arguments, and building on each other's presentations.

The basic difference between ancient and modern sceptics about value scepticism and value analysis goes back to Erasmus and Montaigne, and I think that it is best diagnosed in its Renaissance presentation. Hume is a key figure in a tradition that goes back to Montaigne. He read Montaigne, Pascal, Bayle and Huet, and formulated his views in the light of what his predecessors had said and how they had been criticized and defended. In his moves beyond the Renaissance and 17th-century sceptical tradition, Hume presented *the* crucial version of modern scepticism. In seeing this in terms of what he was building on, I think one can better appreciate what Hume was doing, especially in the crucial area of value scepticism and value explanation.

The scepticism from Montaigne to Hume is definitely related to Sextus. His text was revived in the mid-16th century, and was published in several editions. My researches indicate that almost all serious scholars read Sextus, or Cicero, or the moderns who used their arguments—Montaigne, Sanches, Bayle, Huet. Hume, the end man in this tradition, got most, *maybe all*, his information about ancient scepticism from Pierre Bayle's *Dictionary*, and his diverse works, and from Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet's *Treatise on the Feebleness of the Human Mind*. Hume may have "cribbed" his citations from Sextus second hand. For years I have hoped, so far unsuccessfully, to encourage someone to identify *all* of the passages in Hume's texts which come from Bayle. My guess is that at least 50 % of Hume's discussion of scepticism is taken from or paraphrased from Bayle.

No matter where sceptical thinkers like Hume got their information about ancient scepticism, what is central here is the difference between Sextus and modern sceptics on the sceptical analyses of beliefs about morals, and the relation of these analyses to peoples motivations for action. Sextus, at least in *Adversus Mathematicos* applied the same kind of sceptical challenge to value beliefs as to any other kind of beliefs. He accepted the fact that people have value experiences, but suspended judgment about explanations of these experiences. Sextus, according to Annas, wanted "a life detached from any

concern about value and yet which is given shape by some awareness of value, and is neither whimsical nor mindlessly habitual". However, Sextus, according to Annas, does not really show "how a sceptic can be detached about values without falling into paralysis or eccentricity".

Hume, as a modern sceptic, on the other hand, does not, on this account, even try to be a value sceptic. Unlike his sceptical treatment of causality, of the external world, etc., where Hume confronted our intuitive beliefs with arguments that undermine them, Hume treated value judgments dogmatically. He denied our beliefs about values, and offered a naturalistic explanation of how we act "morally". We are not responding to values, but are psychologically and socially creating them.

Annas claims here Hume "entirely missed Sextus' point", and will have trouble explaining how values motivate us to act. Hume "seems to think that nothing is lost motivationally if I come to see that values are not discovered in the world but are, in a manner a new creation".

It seems to me, to use a sceptical phrase, that Hume is the culmination of a tradition of modern epistemological sceptics who were vitally concerned about how to act morally, if moral knowledge cannot be attained rationally. These sceptics ignored the Pyrrhonian and Academic discussion of values, for a more positive (and dogmatic) explanation, because, I believe, they saw what was at issue was not sceptical consistency, but crucial human behavior, matters of life and death. A, or the, major difference between ancient and modern scepticism is involved here. It appears at the very beginning of the reintroduction of sceptical tropes into intellectual discussions at the beginning of the 16th century.

As I have shown elsewhere, the ancient sceptical approach was introduced into modern thought by Erasmus in his criticism of Martin Luther on the question of whether human beings have free will. Erasmus, using tactics he found in accounts of the Academic sceptics, sought to show difficulties in coming to any view on the subject. Then he suggested, one should suspend judgment on the question, and accept the tradition of the Catholic Church. Luther fired back that what was at issue was too important for such a relaxed attitude. Erasmus could do as he wished, but he should remember that "spiritus sanctus non est scepticus", and Judgment Day is coming. As Luther saw the situation, the question about whether adequate evidence could be found to justify an opinion about whether human beings had free will or not, was not as important as what one believed on the subject. What one believed really mattered in a monumental

sense. Erasmus was trying to duplicate the ancient sceptical attitude. Luther was contending it did not, and could not, apply in the context of the Christian world view. When what one believed affected one's eternal existence, sceptical philosophical discussions could not be allowed to get in the way.

It seems to me that the revival of ancient scepticism, and the rediscovery of Sextus, in the period of the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, placed the sceptical questioning in a context in which there were tremendous stakes involved in what one believed, and not in what evidence led to belief. The first complete translation of Sextus into Latin, by Gentian Hervet, the secretary of the Cardinal of Lorraine, was done right after Hervet's participation at the Council of Trent. He offered his translation of Sextus as *an* or *the* antidote to Calvinism, which he saw as both a dogma and a most dangerous belief system. Pyrrhonism showed that nothing could be known. Hence Calvinism could not be known, and one was left with the Catholic belief system.

Montaigne, perhaps reflecting the spirit of his age more than almost anyone else, carved mottoes from Sextus in the beams of his study, and used Sextus to try to avoid being forced to make a rational choice regarding the merits of Calvinism or Catholicism. As the world he lived in was torn apart by religious warfare, he used sceptical argumentation as a way to remove the forced choice from an evidential context. Custom *and* Revelation would suffice, he said, for him to remain a Catholic. (Of course, there has been question then and now about whether he was, in fact, a sincere Catholic, or even a sincere Christian.)

At the same time two other ingredients of the new scepticism appear in Montaigne's rendition of Sextus. Montaigne, like those to follow, could not calmly suspend judgment about the truth of beliefs about the real world. As he pressed the arguments leading to equipollence, and as he tried to suspend judgment, he did not develop *ataraxia*, tranquility, but rather developed *Angst*, terror, a horrendous fear that reality was evaporating around him, was becoming, in his phrase, smoke, dreams and illusions. The logic of the case might not lead to this, but the psychologic, in the context of Renaissance and Reformation beliefs did.

The other ingredient in Montaigne's presentation that precedes later sceptical discussions is that to philosophize is to learn to die. Philosophy is not a detached examination of beliefs, arguments and systems. It is an activity that enables one to face the realization of impending death. The terror of the evaporating world is also the

terror of the evaporating self. Philosophy as abstract examination is no help. But philosophy as an activity for contending with the unavoidable sense of the possible nothingness of the world and of ourselves, becomes the way of living with this existential nightmare. Montaigne's disciple, Father Pierre Charron, presented Montaigne's scepticism didactically, and then outlined in detail how we live in a dubious world.

Put in these terms, I think one can see that what Descartes, Pascal and Bayle did with scepticism with regard to values was a way of dealing with the crisis of justifying religious belief, the crisis of the potential psychological loss of external and internal reality, and the problem of human finitude. Most of this would sound bizarre to an ancient sceptic, but was only too realistic for a modern one.

Let me just say a few words about Descartes, Pascal and Bayle, before getting to Hume in this modern tradition. Descartes was going to apply his sceptical method in order to find a truth so certain that no sceptical questions could shake it. *Before* he could do this, he had to adopt a provisional morality, to insulate a way of life, a set of value beliefs, from the effects of this method. Without this provisional morality he felt he could not even undertake the philosophical enterprise because worldly, unwise and bad ways of living would distract him. The unquestioned provisional morality enabled him to do this sceptical probing and to overcome philosophical scepticism about knowledge of truth and reality. Then he could prove that God exists, God is no deceiver, and so he could accept the revealed morality of his church. Then a scepticism about his value beliefs could not be entertained.

Pascal saw the question of what to believe morally as all important. He could be more sceptical than Montaigne about beliefs in science and metaphysics. And he could see in the modern world that one could not live as a complete sceptic. Nature constrains our reason and prevents us from raving to that extent. But does nature, which saves us from Montaigne's *Angst*, tell us what to believe morally? For Pascal, one can account for what ordinary people do believe on the basis of prejudice, fear and concupiscence. The result of such beliefs is human misery. Jesuit casuistry can try to justify these beliefs on human grounds, but it cannot overcome people's despair. So, as Pascal urged, people should humble themselves and turn to faith and listen to God as the only guide to genuinely right moral action.

Bayle intensified Pascal's sceptical analysis of any kind of belief, scientific, philosophical, theological, historical or moral, and undermined confidence in views in all these areas. He explained beliefs as

based on, or caused by, custom, education and passion, not on reason or evidence. Feeling was all that made us accept one view rather than another, and act in one way rather than another. And feelings, no matter how strong, could be both delusory and dangerous. Bayle further contended that religious belief did not necessarily lead to desirable behavior. His picture of the immoral life of Biblical heroes like King David, coupled with his picture of the good behavior of atheists like Spinoza, suggested one of Bayle's most controversial claims—that a society of atheists could be more moral than a society of Christians. As a result of this analysis, Bayle claimed that he was a Protestant in the true sense of the word—he protested against everything that was said and everything that was done. The course of human history in which he wallowed revealed so much appalling human behavior that Bayle felt he had to protest and protest, not just suspend judgment. The great modern sceptic found himself in the forefront of the struggle for toleration, and against bigotry of all kinds.

Hume, in the well-known passage at the end of Book I, Part IV of the *Treatise*, saw an impasse between reasons for and against any fundamental beliefs. The passage is actually Hume's version of Pascal's *pensée* 131, and Bayle's comments on it in article "Pyrrho", Remark C. We cannot avoid complete scepticism and nature prevents us from accepting it. We cannot live as sceptics. We have to make choices and we have to act because, as Col. Ollie North told us during the Iran-Contra hearings, it is a dangerous world out there. Action is crucial. Therefore epistemological scepticism has to be insulated from morality, put in the closet. (I think Donald Livingston, in his book on *Hume's Philosophy of Common Life*, well describes the relation of the thorough scepticism of Book I and the philosophy of common life that follows.)

What Hume did is not like what appears in Sextus. This is not surprising in that Hume said on the title-page of the *Treatise* that he was attempting to introduce the experimental method of reasoning into moral subjects. The sceptical analysis is a prelude to this, and was not intended to undermine it. If we are unable to find principles to justify knowledge claims, and if we are led to suspend judgment when we seek such principles, we can nevertheless offer an explanation of why we believe X, Y or Z. From the preface onward Hume offered explanations in psychological terms. He devoted most of his writings to explaining how people come to value beliefs. Hume, as I read him, was not denying that people think they are aware of what is right or wrong, good or bad. Epistemic analysis indicates that people cannot *know* whether value beliefs are true or false. Psychological

analysis indicates that value beliefs are, in fact, emotions, feelings accompanied by ideas. This analysis explains how ordinary value beliefs are epistemically confused, and are psychologically based. The psychic feelings lead to action. People act from passion. "Reason is and only ought to be the slave of the passions". Hence, no matter how sceptical one may be, no matter how thoroughly one has suspended judgment, one acts as a result of feelings or passions. Hence in Hume's account there is no paralysis of motivation or action, and a science of morals is possible.

Hume was not denying that ordinary people think they "know" intuitively or directly that murder is bad, or that a political leader should not be a thief or a sex maniac. When one analyzes what is involved here, one finds the supposed knowledge is in fact the association of a passion or feeling with an idea. Hume's type of account of ordinary value belief is much like that of Hobbes and Spinoza. People talk as if values exist objectively. In fact, people are describing how they feel.

The scientific account of moral beliefs does not often change people's behavior. Hume's "reasonable man" will, presumably, be less impressed than the vulgar by his or her feelings, and will moderate them or try to control them when he can. Hume's *History of England* is a case study of human nature in action. Describing what has happened makes "reasonable" people aware of the dangers of the passionate actions of tyrants, mobs and religious bigots. So, "reasonable" people will modify their reactions to political and moral developments. Hume's own reaction to the radical improvement schemes of the French *philosophes* is a case of this. From becoming aware historically of the dangers of utopianism (dangers in terms of affecting human feelings), a cautious politician like Hume could try to control his feelings and not be carried away, as Turgot, Condorcet and others were, by their belief in the infinite perfectibility of mankind.

A possibly more significant aspect of Hume's study of human moral behavior is his attempt to explain what people *should* do in a world which has no objective values. The sceptics from Montaigne to Bayle argued against religious dogmatism. They developed a view that human behavior in the course of history is nothing but the crimes, follies and misfortunes of the human race. They cast doubt on whether we could discover any theological or providential goals to guide human action. Then, what *should* we do? Our attempt to understand our situation would render us completely Pyrrhonian were not Nature too strong for it. Our nature makes us act, by feelings and passions.

Hume, in the *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion*, considered whether the universe contained values. After discussing the problem

of evil, Hume posed four possibilities—that the universe is good; that it is bad; that it is good and bad; and that it is indifferent or valueless. The first possibility was dismissed because of the problem of evil, the second because it could not account for the existence of good. Hume said that the Manichaean possibility and the valueless one are the only ones that made sense in the light of our experiences. He opted for the indifferent or valueless hypothesis. If there are no objective values, we nevertheless have to act. Hume also discussed the possibility, so strongly presented in Pascal, that choice can be based on what may possibly occur in an after-life. Hume's two suppressed essays on suicide and on the immortality of the soul stressed that there was no evidence of any connection between present experience and a future existence. The choice of whether to commit suicide, Hume said, should be made only on consideration of present feelings, facts and envisaged possible experiences. If one's present experience was miserable, if the medical prognosis was dim, if one had no relatives or friends who would be affected adversely, then why not end one's experience by ending one's life?

Moses Mendelssohn and Immanuel Kant, who knew Hume's moral theory well, tried to tie moral action to either a proof of the immortality of the soul, or a supposition of its immortality. Each in his own way sought to make moral behavior relate to a future state, where rewards and punishments were possible. Hume saw moral decisions as involving only immediate experience, feelings and associated ideas of experienceable states. In so doing, Hume completely separated value beliefs from any religious faith, or any extra-experiential state of affairs. In so doing, Hume portrayed the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment sceptic's position. Epistemic doubt about real features of the world is coupled with doubt about the existence of any objective or real values. Human moral behavior is explained by the action of non-rational factors—feelings and passions.

If this is our state of affairs, can there be any goals or goods? Are they man-made, as Solomon Maimon, Fichte and Nietzsche were to claim? Are such goals and goods meaningless?

As these became overriding concerns of the last two centuries (and especially after the erosion of conviction in most value systems as a result of the two world wars, the modern tyrannies and modern corrupt institutions), Hume's presentation was seen as focusing on a central problem about values in a meaningless world. Sextus, I do not think has been, or could be, very helpful in offering an answer to present concerns. Sextus's text reads like the view of a laid-back Californian, what Vice-President Quayle has called that of the happy camper—what, me worry? Follow custom, convention and feelings. It's like

Reagan's reaction to the stock market crash in October 1987—calm, casual, unconcerned; everyone else is anguishing about how to save the world economy. The classical Pyrrhonist would be unperturbed.

A couple of stories about what happened to some modern sceptics may make the difference clear. In 1680 the Earl of Rochester, one of the most notorious sceptics about accepted religious and moral views became gravely ill. He had been a libertine and a Spinozist. In his last days he called in Gilbert Burnet, later to become Bishop of Salisbury, and recanted his sceptical views because, in Burnet's account, of his fears of the moral consequences of such views in the world to come. A second death-bed confession occurred over fifty years later in Switzerland, when the French translator of Sextus Empiricus, Claude Huart, apologized for the unfortunate social and moral consequences of what he had done. By making Sextus available to the general public, he admitted, we are told, that he helped cause the decline of morals and social behavior in the 18th century. He was even given responsibility for the financial crisis of the South Sea Island Bubble and the Mississippi land speculation of the 1720s.

In both the Earl of Rochester's case and that of Claude Huart, they could be accused, and accept the accusation, that their scepticism had significant moral and social consequences. Their doubts, and the doubts they reported in Sextus, Spinoza, etc., changed people's behavior for the worse. By losing their religious anchors, people became immoral, and behaved accordingly and committed illegal acts. So, scepticism was seen in these cases to be the cause of the most serious social and personal mischief. Instead of leading to equipollence and *ataraxia*, it supposedly led to the worst kind of behavior.

The ancient sceptics would reject these kinds of claims, and insist that the sceptic could not be a danger to himself or herself, or to society, because the sceptic, having no convictions would act according to nature and the social mores. The critics of modern scepticism would say that scepticism undermined the social order. Acting naturally without the religious or social order would lead to the most dangerous and anti-social kinds of behavior.

As a result the modern voices that are heard most, and taken most seriously, are those of the anguished truth-seeker in a meaningless world, one that has no objective moral, social or religious order. From Montaigne to Pascal to Hume to Chestov, Sartre and Camus, there has been terror, misery, despair as people faced such a world, not *ataraxia*, peace of mind. It may be that the framework, the cathedrals of the medieval world, provided too much security. When ancient scepticism was introduced into the debates about rationalizing the world (which explained and justified man's existence from

before birth to beyond the grave) too much was cast in doubt, and in John Donne's phrase, all coherence was gone. The exploration of what assurance we could have after sceptically challenging the previously nicely ordered world showed all innocence was gone, and we could only rely on ourselves and our feelings as guides. The modern sceptic has been in the forefront of delineating what this entails, and in so doing has sought for some naturalistically explicable values, or some kind of blind faith. Neither option has bred the calm tranquility of ancient scepticism. But could it in the modern world in which "we live and move and have our being"? Could one really be calm and unperturbed in the face of present day economic and social disorders that affect the bases of one's ordinary life. Could one be calm in the face of present day political terrorism that has overtaken so many societies?

Ancient scepticism was designed to bring about tranquility in precisely a world run amok, a world which had lost its traditional moorings. But we are living in a world that had order, that had structure in religious and moral terms, for more than a millennium and half. Living in the shadow of this, we have sought for security in terms of finding new structures in new ideologies. Now that these are crumbling, only a few can find peace and solace in detachment and meditation. The rest of us are doomed to live in "fear and trembling". Modern scepticism has made clear what our fundamental problem is, and has made clear the unjustifiability of any basic beliefs. But, as the Catholic sceptic, Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet, said, "It is one thing to philosophize, and another to live". Philosophizing leads us to complete doubt. Our most important problem then is to find out how to live. And in Hume's world without objective values, we need courage to be, and to live according to our unjustified and unjustifiable values.

THE SCEPTICISM OF JOSEPH GLANVILL

Joseph Glanvill (1636-1680) has been portrayed as a general Latitudinarian divine, and as "the most interesting skeptic in the English philosophical tradition prior to Hume".¹ The fact that he also believed in witches and was an important authority for the witch-hunters in England and New England is taken as an oddity, possibly a personal idiosyncrasy. Those who have written on Glanvill as a sceptic, including the author quoted above, R. H. Popkin, have stressed the similarity of Glanvill's sceptical arguments and conclusions to those of Hume. In my introductory essay to the photoreproduction edition of Glanvill's *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion*, published in 1970, I tried to trace a unity in Glanvill's thought starting with his scepticism, then his mitigated formulation of it as a basis for scientific enquiry, then his religious "justification" of his mitigated scepticism, and finally his witch-belief as a scepticism directed against materialistic dogmatists like Hobbes.²

I was satisfied with this construction of Glanvill's view until a few years ago, when it was challenged by Sascha Talmor in her small book, *Glanvill, the Uses and Abuses of Scepticism*.³ She denied the claim of scholars from the 18th century to the present that Glanvill was a precursor of Hume,⁴ by pointing out that the similarity of sceptical arguments of the two thinkers, and the similarity of their conclusions about human inability to know the necessary or real causes of events, did not mean that they shared a common view of what the world was like.⁵ Talmor went on to point out Glanvill's belief in spirits and odd forces indicated that he was operating from a quite differ-

¹ Richard H. Popkin, "Introduction" to Joseph Glanvill, *Essays on Several Important Subjects in Philosophy and Religion* (1676) (New York: Johnson Reprint Corp., 1970), p.v.

² *Ibid.*, pp. v-xxxiii.

³ Sascha Talmor, *Glanvill: The Uses and Abuses of Scepticism*, (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1981).

⁴ On this, see R. H. Popkin, "Joseph Glanvill: Precursor of Hume", *Journal of the History of Ideas* XIV (1953), pp. 292-303, and "The Development of the Philosophical Reputation of Joseph Glanvill", *Journal of the History of Ideas* XV (1954), pp. 305-311.

⁵ Cf. Talmor, *op. cit.*, esp. chap. 4.

ent intellectual perspective than Hume's hard-nosed empiricism.⁶ As I grudgingly conceded her point, I decided to look into the sceptical sources of Glanvill's view, and found that they came not from foreseeing Hume's arguments, but from following out the "incurable scepticism" employed by the Cambridge Platonist, Henry More, to dispose of Cartesianism.⁷ Glanvill, seen as a modifier of More's special kind of scepticism, makes sense of Glanvill's acute critique of causal and metaphysical knowledge, his "religious" justification of limiting the destructive consequences of complete scepticism, his positive scientific program, including a Cartesian model for interpreting the "new science", and his spiritology which he and Henry More developed together. So, I shall try to delineate to what extent Glanvill was a Cambridge Platonist follower of More, to what extent he was a follower of More's "incurable scepticism", and to what extent he had formulated a novel position uniting scepticism, science and religion.

First, let me say a few words about More's "incurable scepticism". As a result of my re-investigation of Glanvill's roots, inspired by Sascha Talmor's critique of me, I found that More had a sceptical crisis when he was a student at Cambridge, and only found relief from complete scepticism in the mysticism of the *Theologia Germanica*, a minor mystical treatise that had earlier transformed Luther. From this mystical relief, More went on to become a Cartesian, and then an anti-Cartesian.⁸ In working out his stance in *An Antidote against Atheism* (1655), More pointed out that the answer to atheism depends on accepting the postulate or hypothesis that "*Our faculties are true.*"⁹ But this cannot be established to the extent "that a mans understanding shall be forced to confess that it is impossible to be otherwise".¹⁰ Nothing can be so demonstrated, "For it is possible that *Mathematicall* evidence itself, may be but a constant undiscoverable delusion, which our nature is necessarily and perpetually obnoxious unto, and that either fatally or fortuitously there has been in the world time out of minds such a Being as we call *Man*, whose essential

⁶ *Ibid.*, chap. 5.

⁷ On this, see R. H. Popkin, "The 'Incurable Scepticism' of Henry More, Blaise Pascal and Søren Kierkegaard", in R. H. Popkin and C. B. Schmitt, *Scepticism from the Renaissance to the Enlightenment*, Wolfenbütteler Forschungen, Band 35, pp. 169-184 and above, pp..

⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 171-173; and Robert Crocker, "Henry More: a biographical essay", in Sarah Hutton, ed., *Henry More (1614-1687). Tercentenary Studies* (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishing, 1990), pp. 1-17.

⁹ Henry More, *An Antidote to Atheism* (2nd ed., London, 1655), pp. B3v-B4r.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Lib. I, chap. 2, p. 3.

property it is to be then most of all mistaken, when he conceives a thing most evidently true".¹¹

Hume had called such a scepticism about the reliability of our faculties an "incurable scepticism", since we could not trust the use of our faculties to overcome it (since they could be deluded). Hume claimed that such a scepticism was so excessive that it really could not be entertained by anyone.¹² Elsewhere I have shown that Henry More, Blaise Pascal and Søren Kierkegaard each held to a version of this "incurable scepticism".¹³ More, having stated the extreme possibility that our faculties might be unreliable, then kept dismissing the sceptic who used this as an excuse for rejecting the existence of God, the immortality of the soul, and sound and true religion and science, as perverse. Even though we cannot prove our faculties are reliable, the person who doubts them is "next door to madness or dotage". "[P]erfect Scepticism . . . is a disease incurable, and a thing rather to be pitied or laughed at, then seriously opposed. For when a man is so fugitive and unsettled that he will not stand to the verdict of his own Faculties, one can no more fasten any thing upon him, than he can write in the water, or tye knots in the wind".¹⁴ So More kept appealing to the inability of sane, reasonable men to doubt their faculties, and to the madness of those who try to do so.

Glanvill saw the reliability of our faculties as central for avoiding any ultimate and overwhelming scepticism. But, Glanvill, like Bishop John Wilkins, saw that the kind of certainty we would need to be absolutely sure of our faculties ("infallible certainty" in which we are assured "'tis impossible things should be otherwise than we conceive them or affirm them") is unattainable—"for it may not be absolutely impossible, but that our Faculties may be so construed, as always to deceive us in the things we judg most certain and assured".¹⁵

We may not be able to attain infallible certitude, but we can attain indubitable certitude—that our faculties are true. This is indubitable in two senses—one, that one, we find we have to believe them, and, two, that we have no reason of cause for doubting them. We have to believe our faculties are reliable if we are to have any rational life

¹¹ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

¹² David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. Selby-Bigge (Oxford: Oxford University Press), p. 180.

¹³ Popkin, "The 'Incurable Scepticism'" in this volume, pp. 203-221 above.

¹⁴ Henry More, *The Immortality of the Soul* (London, 1659), p. 9.

¹⁵ Joseph Glanvill, "Of Scepticism and Certainty", second essay in *Essays on Several Important Subjects*, p. 49. See also John Wilkins, *Of the Principles and Duties of Natural Religion* (London, 1675), p. 9.

at all, even though we have no evidence that our faculties are, *in fact*, reliable.¹⁶ Descartes has supplied us with a reason for doubting our faculties are true, namely that they (the faculties) may be so contrived, so as to always deceive us, even in matters we judge to be most certain and assured. But we have no reason to believe this in this case. We know of no evidence that our faculties are deceptive. All of our mental life presupposes that this is not the case. So, we are certain of the reliability of our faculties in the same of indubitable certainty.¹⁷

More kept deriding the sceptic, and diagnosing him or her as a manic depressive or otherwise mentally or morally deranged person. But More never gave up his incurable scepticism, and used mottoes from Sextus Empiricus's classical sceptical work stating that nothing could be known on the title-page of one of his works.¹⁸

Glanvill saw the sceptical problem as one that could not be so easily set aside. It was unreasonable to doubt our faculties, but not impossible. It was unreasonable because we had no evidence they were delusory. But the possibility they were always so remained a genuine possibility because of Descartes's demon hypothesis. One could point out that belief in our faculties was a prerequisite for accepting the results of any rational activity, like logic or mathematics, the results of any scientific activity, and the results of any historical activity. We know our faculties can be misused and can mislead us, as the senses sometimes do. But this state of affairs is corrigible *if* we accept the ultimate reliability and indubitable certainty of our faculties. We have no reason to believe that they are in general deceptive. Glanvill carried this on to base acceptance of historical data (and especially that of Scripture) on the indubitable principle that "*Mankind cannot be supposed to combine to deceive, in things wherein they can have no design or interest to do it*".¹⁹ Of course, it is remotely possible that such a conspiracy is going on, "yet no Man in his Wits can believe it ever was, or will be so".²⁰ So, scepticism can be set aside in mathematics, science, history and theology, because we have no actual reason to doubt the results in these areas. We have to believe various finding and act with confidence. But, having

¹⁶ Glanvill, "Of Scepticism and Certainty", pp. 47 ff.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 47-48.

¹⁸ See the title page to Henry More, *A Modest Enquiry into the Mystery of Iniquity* (London, 1664) and in *The Theological Works* (London, 1708) p. 385, where a longer title-page is given.

¹⁹ Glanvill, "Of Scepticism and Certainty", p. 49.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, *loc. cit.*

said this, Glanvill immediately made clear that he had not offered or provided any way of eliminating ultimate scepticism. It still remains possible that all that we believe as certain, is not the case. "There still remains the possibility of our being mistaken in all matters of humane Belief and Inquiry",²¹ even though we are convinced we have useful knowledge, such as was being developed by the Royal Society, knowledge which reinforces our evidence of God's Governance of the World.

Glanvill's discussion of the relation of reason and religion is perhaps his most original contribution—that of offering a rational-sceptical fideism as a way of living with irremedial scepticism. More had advanced his radical scepticism about the reliability of our faculties to push aside his opponents's dogmatism, then ridiculed any one who took scepticism seriously, and insisted that one had to accept our faculties in order to prove God's existence and soul's immortality. Bishop Wilkins just insisted that one had to accept the reliability of our senses as the pre-condition of all indubitable knowledge.²² Glanvill made the acceptance of the reliability of our faculties a genuine act of faith. "*The belief of our Reason* is an Exercise of Faith, and Faith is an Act of Reason".²³ He had preceded this by stating that "Reason is certain and infallible", which turns out to be based on our knowledge "that first Principles are certain, and that our Senses do not deceive us, because God that bestowed them upon us, is True and Good".²⁴

As I have tried to show in previous discussions of this passage, Glanvill was not emulating Descartes in making true knowledge depend upon the proof that God is not a deceiver. Rather Glanvill was offering a kind of rational fideism. Faith, and faith alone, is the basis for our belief in our reason. We believe in our reason because we believe in God's veracity. We do not try to prove that God is truthful; we believe this. Thus, faith in God gives us faith in reason, which in turn "justifies" our belief that God is no deceiver.

Glanvill did not offer Descartes's circular reasoning to establish that God is no deceiver and that our rational faculties used to prove this are therefore reliable. He saw that the ultimate guarantee of our certitude depends not on what we can prove, but on what we can

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²² See Wilkins, *op.cit.*, *loc. cit.*

²³ Glanvill, "The Agreement of Reason and Religion", Essay Five in *Essays on several Important Subjects*, p. 21. (Each essay has its own pagination.) See Popkin, "Introduction" to *Essays*, pp. xxii-xxvi; and Henry van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690* (The Hague: Nijhoff, 1963), pp. 71-89.

²⁴ Glanvill, "Agreement of Reason and Religion", p. 20.

believe. We can believe that God is truthful, and hence believe in the reliability of our faculties. The first belief is reasonable, since we have no reason to doubt of it. This, then, enables us to avoid ultimate scepticism, by avoiding the fundamental sceptical problem of proving our first principles.²⁵

Glanvill's rational fideism, which does not appear in More, grows out of seeing the conditions requisite for certain and unquestionable reasoning (namely that God is reliable), and is in sharp contrast to the irrational fideism being offered in the late 17th century by Pierre Bayle and Pierre Jurieu. They had said that faith was built upon the ruins of reason, and took the view that faith is above reason to mean that it was contrary (in any rational sense) to reason.²⁶ Glanvill posed the possibility that rationality could be based on faith, and in terms of what human beings consider reasonable, accepting such faith is an exercise of reason. Using this rational fideism, Glanvill then tried to show the reasonableness of religious belief, and of Latitudinarian Christianity.

The last side of this story that I will deal with is Glanvill's supposed aberration, his belief in witches. I have always been struck by the way Glanvill presented his case—first as a critique of the dogmatism of the anti-witch faction, that of the Hobbesian materialists and such like persons. The question of whether evil spirits exist, Glanvill pointed out, is a factual question, not a metaphysical one, and has to be answered by examining the empirical evidence.²⁷ Here Glanvill and More compiled ample testimonials that should convince any "reasonable" person that (a) it is possible that evil spirits or witches exist, (b) it is probable that they do, and (c) that the acknowledgement of their existence allows for the best explanation of various observed phenomena. (And, besides, Glanvill pointed out, various societies have laws against practicing witchcraft, so it seems likely that there is something of this sort that could be practiced.)²⁸

The possible existence of witches is also part of a larger and more significant question—that of the existence of spirits. If demonic or evil

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 20-22; and Popkin, "Introduction", p. xxiii.

²⁶ Cf. R. H. Popkin, "Pierre Bayle's Place in 17th Century Scepticism", in Paul Dibon, ed., *Pierre Bayle: le Philosophe de Rotterdam* (Amsterdam: Elsevier, 1959), pp. 13-14.

²⁷ Glanvill, "Philosophical Considerations against Modern Sadducism", Sixth essay in *Essays on several Important Subjects*, pp. 1-13. See also the opening sections of Glanvill's *Sadducismus Triumphatus: or a Full and Plain Evidence concerning Witches and Apparitions* (London, 1681).

²⁸ Glanvill, "Philosophical Considerations", esp. p. 3.

spirits cannot exist, how can we be sure that good spirits—angels or God—can exist? To deny the possibility of the existence of witches is to deny the possibility of any sort of spiritual or divine world.²⁹

Having made his case, Glanvill did not follow his friends, Henry More and Lady Anne Conway, in opting for a spiritological cosmology. Instead he offered a non-dogmatic, or deontologized Cartesianism as the best scientific model of explanation for natural phenomena. In his continuation of Bacon's *New Atlantis*, Glanvill had his sage present Cartesianism as "the neatest *Mechanical* System of things that had appear'd in the world", though it was not certain or all-encompassing.³⁰ The sages could also accept the pre-existence of the soul and the existence of spiritual agents, whose manner of operating may not be known or even knowable to us.³¹

To sum this all up—what was Glanvill's view? Jackson Cope has said that Glanvill was not really a philosopher.³² I think he was a philosopher, a serious one who was an eclectic, taking part of his view from Henry More's Cambridge Platonism, part from Descartes, and part from the Baconian empiricism of some of the Royal Society thinkers. He was less Hume's precursor than More's postcursor, developing in a more complete, more serious and more mitigated form, the excessive or incurable scepticism that More advanced in order to demolish his opponents, and then laughed it off as he proceeded to develop his own Platonic theory. Glanvill explored More's total scepticism, accepted it, and found a way of defusing it without rejecting reason or rationality. The defused scepticism allowed faith to underwrite reason, and reason to justify faith. This combination allowed for a presentation of a basis for accepting the new science, the world of spirits, and a reasonable formulation of Christianity. Glanvill's world of natural science, spirits, and Christianity, based on the "plausible" testimony of historical documents, is one way these kinds of knowledge could be brought into harmony. Glanvill paid the price of having this all rest on a basically uneliminable scepticism. If one could find solace and comfort in a faith in a non-deceiving Deity, then a nice harmonious world of science and religion could be accepted.

As people lost their faith in any kind of deity, all that was left of Glanvill's view was his sceptical arguments that looked like Hume's,

²⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

³⁰ Glanvill, "Anti-fanatical Religion, and Free Philosophy. In a Continuation of the *New Atlantis*", Seventh Essay in *Essays on several Important Subjects*, p. 50.

³¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 50-55.

³² Jackson I. Cope, *Joseph Glanvill. Anglican Apologist* (St. Louis: Washington University Press, 1956). On this see Popkin, "Introduction", pp. xxx-xxxiii.

and his strange belief in witches. If one can see him in context, as the friend, collaborator, extenuator and modifier and postcursor of Henry More, then I think Glanvill may properly be classified as a sceptical Cambridge Platonist, a strange intellectual animal spawned by More's initial sweeping sceptical claims, and stabilized by Glanvill's own contribution, rational fideism, as the way of living with scepticism. Seen this way, Glanvill was an original thinker, whose kind of scepticism deserves to be considered on its own merits.

XVI

SCHLICK AND SCEPTICISM

Although most emphasis has usually been placed on the role of logical positivism as a critique of metaphysical views, it is also the case that logical positivism from its inception onward has also been seen by its advocates as a bulwark against scepticism. This comes out most clearly in discussions in the writings of the leader of the Vienna Circle, Moritz Schlick. We will see that Schlick thought of scepticism as a fundamental danger to the program of the logical positivists, and he thought he could dispense with any sceptical doubt by clarifying the nature of knowledge.

The importance of scepticism for Schlick can be seen at the outset in its being mentioned on the very first page of his *General Theory of Knowledge*, the classic initial presentation of the theory of logical positivism. Here Schlick pointed out that the sceptics argue that since we do not understand how knowing is possible, we therefore do not actually possess any knowledge. Until we understand how knowing takes place and what it involves, we do not know anything.¹ In a very serious sense, Schlick's *General Theory of Knowledge* is an attempt to answer this sceptical view. This begins to come out very clearly in section 16, entitled "A skeptical consideration of analysis".² Here Schlick considers whether any sceptical problems can be raised about analytical judgments.

The specific reason for doubting analytic judgments that he takes up involves the claim that conceptual relationships are only accessible to us in so far as they are represented by conscious processes. A deduction is not itself open to question, but the mental process by which deductions are represented in thought can be doubted. Here Schlick refers to the section in David Hume's *A Treatise of Human Nature*, entitled "Scepticism with regard to reason" (Book I, Part IV, chap. i). Hume asserted that the deductive process was infallible, but in order to ascertain that the process had been carried out in any particular

¹ Moritz Schlick, *General Theory of Knowledge*, trans. by A. E. Blumberg (Wien-New York: Springer 1974), p. 1; *Allgemeine Erkenntnislehre* (Berlin-Springer, 1925), p. 1. Throughout I have quoted from the English translation, which is more readily available in libraries today. However, I have also given references to the original German text, and have reproduced it when it seemed appropriate.

² "Skeptische Betrachtung der Analyse".

case, one would have to appeal to a psychological observation. If I add up some numbers, to tell if I have done so correctly, I rely on my psychological observation of my following the rules of arithmetic and logic. This psychological observation is empirical and fallible. So I have to rely on my psychological observation, on my ability to observe my following the rules of arithmetic and logic. This second observation is in turn empirical and fallible, and its check and the check of the check, etc. also are. So Hume claimed this problem of psychological checking deductions undermines all principles of the understanding, and reveals that no analytic proposition can be known as true and certain.³ Schlick commented on the passage in Hume saying, "When we stand with such thoughts on the highest peak of skepticism, a shudder of intellectual anxiety comes over us".⁴ In order to overcome this anxiety, Schlick sought to show that the conditions by which we determine the truth of an analytic proposition do not depend upon psychological (empirical) considerations. Here he was striking out not only at the extreme scepticism raised by Hume, but also at the psychologism rampant in nineteenth century British empiricism and in German thought in the early twentieth century.

The questioning of analytic propositions on psychological grounds had already been advanced by Descartes and Locke. They both pointed out that in order to determine if a proposition was the conclusion of a valid deduction, one had to rely on one's memory of the premises and the antecedent steps. Since memory is fallible, sceptical doubts can be raised at this point. Descartes had tried to resolve them by having God issue insurance policies to each of us if we only judged about clear and distinct ideas. Locke, on the other hand, tried to solve the problem psychologically, insisting that we could intuit each step in the demonstration, and that intuition was the basis of all of our certainty.

Schlick saw that either there was some genuine basis for relying on our memory under certain conditions, or we would have no way of carrying on rational intellectual processes. After considering possible solutions offered by Meinong and Husserl, Schlick set forth his own answer to this basic sceptical problem. His answer to some extent

³ Cf. David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge edition (Oxford, 1978), pp. 180-183. On page 183 Hume said "when I proceed still farther, to turn the scrutiny against every successive estimation I make of my faculties, all the rules of logic require a continual diminution, and at last a total extinction of belief and evidence".

⁴ Schlick, *General Theory of Knowledge*, p. 118; German text, p. 109, "Wenn wir mit solchen Gedanken auf dem höchsten unübersteigbaren Gipfel des Skepsis stehen, so überkommt uns wohl ein Schauer, eine intellektuelle Angst".

appears to beg the question. He stated, "It follows undoubtedly that the reliability of recall, at least for certain small intervals of time, represents a necessary presupposition without which our consciousness—even in the case of merely analytic reasoning—cannot with certainty make the slightest step forward".⁵ One can imagine Hume ready to cry out, "How do you tell that "It follows undoubtedly . . ."? Hume himself at the end of Book I of the *Treatise* apologized for loosely throwing in phrases like "It follows undoubtedly", "Tis evident", throughout his book. He claimed they were psychological remarks indicating how strongly he felt when writing the sentences in which the phrases occurred.⁶ If Schlick made such an admission or confession he would have had the intellectual anxieties he was trying to overcome.

Instead Schlick set out to eliminate any misgivings we have that arise from the fleeting character of our ideas and images in the section entitled "The Unity of Consciousness".

Patiently Schlick sought to establish that there was a way out of this ultimate doubt. One could not prove the presupposition about the reliability of recall. Any proof would itself be open to attack by this radical scepticism. Therefore, Schlick contended that the solution was "to present something that is exempt in advance from any doubt, that is, a fact".⁷ If such a fact can be found then this journey into scepticism will have issued in certain basic data of consciousness of immeasurable significance.

The crucial fact is the plain, ordinary one that is called the unity of consciousness, and it "is more primitive than any doubt, more primitive than any thought".⁸ It cannot be expressed in either a definition or a description. It can only be expressed in either a definition or a description. It can only be hinted at, as when we speak of items being "in" one's consciousness, Schlick insisted that consciousness is not a bundle or collection of perceptions, as Hume said, but that there is something more—the *unity* of consciousness. What this is cannot be described more clearly. Nonetheless "its presence is simply a fact".⁹

Can the sceptic doubt this assertion? Schlick tried to parry this possibility by suggesting that one try to imagine what a bundle of

⁵ Schlick, *General Theory*, p. 122; German text, p. 112, "So hat sich unzweifelhaft ergeben . . .".

⁶ Hume, *Treatise*, p. 274.

⁷ Schlick, *General Theory*, p. 122; German text, p. 112.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 122, German text, pp. 112-13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 123; German text, p. 113, "sein Vorhandensein ist schlechthin Tatsache".

psychic data would be like if it lacked unity. Would the elements in the bundle be the experience of one consciousness? We are aware not just of a succession of psychic data, but of them being present to one consciousness. The various items may have no relationship to each other. What unites them is their presence in one consciousness. If this unity is absent, then so also will be the fact of consciousness itself. And so Schlick claimed, "where there is consciousness at all, there is also unity of consciousness".¹⁰ Individual moments of consciousness then cannot be considered independently of one another. They are essentially interconnected with one another. This interconnection must be accepted as an ultimate fact.

Schlick then went on to contend that "this indescribable interconnection: contains within itself what we call memory. The momentary contents of consciousness extend beyond themselves into following moments. This extension binds these moments into a unity, and involves what we call immediate recall. This recall holds the various experiences of a person together so that they can be considered part of a continuous consciousness. In pathological cases of multiple personalities, a physical individual has more than one consciousness with different groups of recollections. This empirical information is supposed to help establish that the connectedness that takes up the unity of consciousness is the connectness of recall".¹¹

Schlick, at this point, stated that what he had been saying for the last five pages did not constitute actual explanations or knowledge. Rather these statements were only intended to draw people's attention to "what is peculiar about the fact of the unity of consciousness".¹² Everyone experiences the fact in oneself. When one examines this experience, one finds (but one does not conclude by an inferential procedure) that "wherever there is consciousness there is also unity of consciousness, and where there is unity of consciousness there is also memory".¹³

Schlick immediately followed this by making the above realization into a guarantee of memory, "since it is a precondition for consciousness itself".¹⁴ He cited Kant as contending that the fact of consciousness guarantees to some degree that what we are thinking of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 125; German text, p. 115, "wo überhaupt Bewusstsein ist, da ist auch Einheit des Bewusstseins".

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 126-127; German text, pp. 116-117.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 127; German text, p. 117.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 127; German text, p. 117.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 127; German text, p. 117, "weil sie eine Bedingung des Bewusstseins selbst ist".

is precisely the same as what we were thinking of a moment earlier. But the degree, Schlick admitted, only applied to what was included in a conscious present. This continuity of consciousness would not necessarily extend over a sufficient duration as is involved in carrying out a deduction. And so, "extreme skepticism has apparently still not been deprived of every foothold".¹⁵

However, Schlick asserted, a person can improve his attention by various psychological means. Can it ever happen then that a deduction can be carried out with absolute certainty, so that it is "safe from the threat of extreme doubt"?¹⁶ His answer is that we do experience as a fact that some analyses are assured. We experience this in certain instances. We are able to specify empirically the approximate circumstances when we usually have this experience. And in view of this, we have breached the unlimited power of skepticism.¹⁷

Schlick then pushed his case a bit further. Since the unity of consciousness provides the guarantee that ideas are sufficiently constant throughout the duration of the present, then there are circumstances, such as those that take place under extreme concentration, that allow us to base a certainty extending over longer periods of time. So, we can carry over the consciousness of constancy to somewhat lengthier durations. This, Schlick stated, gives us a certainty "free of doubt—indeed *prior* to any doubt", whenever these facts of consciousness are experienced.¹⁸ To obviate the problem that Descartes or Hume had raised, that some people, dullards, think they have this kind of certainty when they do not, Schlick declared that "The active mind of a clear-sighted thinker brings together complicated contents of consciousness into a stable unity. But everything escapes the mental view of one who is untalented; his ideas flicker unsteadily back and forth, and we say he lacks the capacity for concentrated attention".¹⁹ (We say it, but does the untalented person believe it? Who decides who is in which class? The sceptic who questions Schlick's solution can raise the point of whether it is self-evident that one is able to experience this certainty only when ideas are constant, etc. Maybe the person experiencing the certainty is an untalented dullard, deceiving himself. As Gassendi pointed out to Descartes, the world is full of people who

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 128; German text, p. 118, "und so ist dem radikalen Skeptizismus hier scheinbar immer noch nicht aller Halt geraubt".

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129; German text, p. 118.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 129; German text, p. 119.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 129; German text, p. 119.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 130; German text, p. 119.

believe they have clear and distinct ideas when they seem to be quite confused.)²⁰

Schlick just reiterated his basic answer to scepticism, namely that we do not possess the ability to hold on to our ideas, through minimal periods of time, as firmly as is needed to carry out analytic inferences with full confidence, and this is guaranteed by the unity of our consciousness. If we did not have this ability to tell if ideas are the same or different, inference would be impossible.²¹ The sceptic could of course say that inference, in the sense of strictly logical operations, may be impossible. On Schlick's account it is only our confidence that makes us think otherwise. And how do we know our confidence is not misguided? Schlick was appealing to psychological certainty, a feeling, as the guarantee. Then he turned to the argument from catastrophe—if this guarantee is inadequate, there could be no knowledge, inference, nor definite thought. The sceptic is in fact questioning whether there is such knowledge or inference in the sense that dogmatists use the terms. The sceptic is not denying that people make inferences. He is doubting that one can show that some of these are certain or indubitable.

Schlick saw that the sceptic was not challenging the correctness of the logical rules of analysis. In fact, with the possible exception of Pierre Bayle, sceptics from Sextus Empiricus to Hume developed "a scepticism with regard to reason" by accepting the rules of logic, but questioning the human application of them.²² As Schlick put it, "what we are faced with is a mistrust directed at our mental capacities".²³ Can whatever psychological certainty we can find in our consciousness become a basis for logical certainty?

Schlick set out to answer this by examining the contentions of those who try to make logical structures into [psycho]logical ones, and those who try to make logical structures ideal ones. Between these two views, Schlick sought to maintain that there "are special features of mental processes through which we obtain unmistakable insight into truth of judgments that rest on the analysis of concepts".²⁴ He denied that these features were something called "self-evidence", since

²⁰ Pierre Gassendi, *The Fifth Set of Objections*, in Haldane and Ross, eds., René Descartes, *Philosophical Works* (New York: Dover Publications, 1955), Vol. II, pp. 151-152.

²¹ Schlick, *General Theory*, pp. 130-131; German text, p. 120.

²² For Bayle's possible exception, see his discussion in art. "Pyrrhon", Rem. B., *Dictionnaire historique et critique*.

²³ Schlick, *General Theory*, p. 134; German text, p. 124.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 147; German text, p. 135.

the sceptic could ask is it self-evident that P is self-evident, and so on. To avoid this challenge, Schlick insisted "that the foundations of what we know are neither certain nor uncertain; they merely *are*".²⁵ The so-called experience of self-evidence seems to occur sometimes in cases of notoriously false judgments. People defending all sorts of weird views claim their judgments are self-evident. So, if self-evidence is not what guides us to truth, then which data of consciousness do accomplish this? With regard to empirical propositions about reality, a pragmatic verification procedure leads us to a conviction of truth or falsity. However with regard to analytical propositions, they require no confirmation by experience in order to be accepted as true. "We also know that the fleeting and continuous character of mental processes does not prevent us from making correct analytical judgments and inferences and from recognizing that they have been made",²⁶ and that this does not require relying on claims about self-evidence.

The key factor in analysis or deduction is that identity of certain propositions. In our mental life, the exhibiting of an identity "takes place by means of more or less intuitive processes through which the discontinuous conceptual relations are copied . . . In order to grasp the truth of any general proposition I must first 'understand' it".²⁷ In doing this, in gaining "insight into its truth", the culmination is an "identity experience through which certain representations or acts are proved to be one and the same".²⁸ This experience, Schlick contended, is what is commonly called a feeling of self-evidence. But the occurrence of this feeling, he claimed, is not an infallible criterion of truth, because "the decisive data of consciousness may actually be present without the judgment, into whose consideration they enter, necessarily being correct".²⁹ The correspondence between the concept or judgments and their intuitive representations may be faulty. The same datum of consciousness may come to represent different concepts. If this happens, an experience of identity may appear at the wrong place.

Just when it might seem that the sceptics would win, if such an error could occur, Schlick simply asserted that this kind of mistake could be detected by thinking through the analysis again. Hume

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 148; German text, p. 136, "Die Grundlagen alles Wissens sind nämlich weder gewiss noch ungewiss, sondern sie *sind* einfach".

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 165; German text, p. 152.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 166; German text, p. 153.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 167; German text, p. 153.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 167; German text, p. 153.

might claim that the kind of mistake could occur with each rethinking. Schlick instead simply declared, "It is improbable that this will occur a second time in the same manner, especially if the reexamination is conducted by another person. Thus the discrepancy will be exposed".³⁰ The sceptic can ask what made Schlick so sanguine, in view of the history of individual and collective errors throughout the ages? Schlick admitted the obvious, that "there is no psychological formula for altogether avoiding discrepancies, and for having the feeling of self-evidence always turn up in the right place".³¹ If there were such a formula, teaching would always be successful, and there would be no need for having erasers on pencils. So, Schlick was willing to generalize this sceptical result, and say that "there is no guarantee that the correctness of a particular deduction will become evident to a particular consciousness every time".³² But this, however, he insisted, did not mean that there is no foundation for incontestable knowledge. All that is required to show that there is such a foundation is that the experience of identity and the accompanying feeling of self-evidence do occur at the right time under certain circumstances. And, before the sceptic has a chance to shout "How do we know when that occurs?", Schlick calmly pronounced, "that this is the case, is a fact beyond all doubt".³³

What sort of a fact can this then be? We may be able to raise questions about when or whether propositions about the world have been verified, but "There is no such problem for conceptual propositions or analytic judgments".³⁴ If a consciousness is able to comprehend an analytic proposition at all, it has also the capacity for recognizing its truth. To bring in, as Descartes did, the cases of madmen is irrelevant. Their consciousnesses are incapable of grasping truths. (Of course, Schlick ignored the problem of determining an acceptable criterion for deciding who is sane and who is not.) And so Schlick concluded "that in the case of analytic judgments I am guaranteed their absolute truth. I can be certain that they must always turn out to be true".³⁵

With the lengthy examination of the psychological processes, and the logical conditions, under which truths are recognized and are guar-

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 167; German text, p. 154.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 168; German text, p. 154.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 168; German text, p. 154.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 168; German text, p. 154, "dass dies aber der Fall ist, steht als Tatsache über allem Zweifel fest".

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 169; German text, p. 155.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 170; German text, p. 156.

anteed, Schlick believed that he had successfully climbed down from the highest peak of scepticism, and had overcome the greatest doubts raised by Descartes and Hume about our rational knowledge. Near the end of the *General Theory of Knowledge*, Schlick considered another form of sceptical objection, namely to question whether analytic judgments, though true, have unconditional validity. What is presented is something like Gassendi's "objection of objections" to Descartes's system, namely that all of this may be true in your mind, but does it have any objective truth about reality?³⁶ Does reality have to obey the laws of logic? The fact that we cannot conceive what such a world would be like does not make it impossible. However, Schlick insisted, the laws of logic—the principles of identity, contradiction and excluded middle "simply regulate how we *designate the real*".³⁷ Whatever contravenes these principles is unthinkable, and is impossible in terms of concepts and judgments. Thus analytic judgments, as well as the principles of logic, must hold with incontestable certainty about reality. Let anyone think Schlick had turned into an idealistic metaphysician in order to defeat the sceptics, he quickly put matters into perspective by saying, "There is nothing remarkable about this and nothing philosophically significant".³⁸ It just shows how we use concepts and judgments.

With this Schlick indicated he had eliminated the sceptical challenge. First he appealed to the basic fact that we can tell when certain concepts are identical. We have an identity experience, and a feeling of self-evidence. Even though we can be mistaken about whether in a given case we are having such an experience, it is the case that the experience does occur under certain circumstances. If the sceptic tries to challenge this, he is challenging whether identities are recognizable, and whether we can tell what concepts mean. If we are not able to do that much then intellectual discourse is impossible. (The argument from catastrophe.) Schlick said he could not prove the basic contention, but could just indicate that it was involved as the guaranteed foundation of knowledge. By appealing to the unity of consciousness, and how through its unity we could recognize inferences and deductions, as strings of identities, the *fact* was pointed to. Presumably those who were unaware of the *fact* were in no position to argue for or against anything. Quibbles just seemed to lead to a

³⁶ On Gassendi's "objection of objections", see R. H. Popkin, *The History of Scepticism from Erasmus to Spinoza* (Berkeley-Los Angeles-London: University of California Press, 1979), pp. 205-206.

³⁷ Schlick, *General Theory*, p. 337; German text, p. 209.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 338; German text, p. 310.

denial of meaningful intellectual activity, or to using the occasional mental lapses as measures of all mental activity. Schlick saw his insistence on the certitude of analytic judgments as the ultimate bulwark against scepticism. Since he had examined so much of the literature of the time about such concepts as "self-evidence", he saw where the heart of the problem lay. However some of his later considerations indicate that he was not entirely satisfied with his resolution of the central sceptical problem of epistemology.

In one of his lectures of 1932 at the University of London, on "The Validity of Knowledge", after advancing his theory that the meaning and verification of a proposition involve the same process, he brought up the questions as to whether there could be any serious sceptical doubts about analytic judgments. He listed the sceptical case as claiming "that the human mind is so weak that it cannot be sure of the truth of tautologies even" because in order to convince myself of the truth of a tautological statement, I have to keep in mind the exact meaning of the terms occurring in it, and their interconnections. I would have to remember all the definitions involved. It may be the case that my memory fails me while I am doing this. "So how can I be sure of anything?"³⁹

Schlick offered as a response to these sceptical doubts the contention that "If during the short process of thinking we should forget the signification of the words (perhaps without knowing it) the consequence would be that we are unable to understand the meaning of the sentence. We have no proposition at all, but just an empty series of falsities. There is a proposition only after we have understood the sentence, and if we have understood it we have understood it as a tautology and know it is true".⁴⁰ He did not consider, however, the sceptical possibilities that we think we understand the meaning of the sentence, when we, in some sense, do not, and we think we have a proposition and do not notice that, in some sense, we have only an empty series of falsities.

In a later paper, one of his last from 1936, "Meaning and Verification", he contended that we can tell what is logically possible or impossible because a logical impossibility involves a discrepancy between the definition of terms and the ways we use them. This logical impossibility, Schlick insisted, is not, as J. S. Mill and Herbert

³⁹ Schlick, "The Validity of Knowledge", the third lecture of the series, "Form and Content, an Introduction to Philosophical Thinking", delivered at the University of London, November 1932; published in Moritz Schlick, *Gesammelte Aufsätze, 1926-1936* (Wien: Gerold & Co., 1938), p. 229.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 229-230.

Spencer claimed, due to laws governing the psychological processes of thinking. Once again Schlick tried to maintain a strict demarcation between the logical and the psychological. Self-contradictions are not thoughts that we find by experiment that we are unable to think.⁴¹

Therefore, Schlick contended, we can conclude that "Verifiability, which is the sufficient and necessary condition of meaning, is a possibility of the logical order: it is created by constructing the sentences in accordance with the rules by which its terms are defined".⁴² But what status do these rules have? They are not rules discovered in nature. Rather they are man-made, and in principle arbitrary. Meaning is given to a sentence by stipulating how it can be verified according to the rules. The possibility of verification does not depend upon any "experimental truth". Verifiability is independent of experience. That something is verifiable "is determined solely by our definitions, by the rules which have been fixed for our language, or which we can fix arbitrarily at any moment".⁴³ The rules of language are, Schlick said, rules concerning the application of language. Therefore, the ability to express something and the ability to verify it are one and the same thing.

This led Schlick to insist that meaning is not the same as any of the psychological data which make up the material of a mental sentence or thought. Citing Carnap, Schlick contended that "the question of meaning has nothing to do with the psychological question as to the mental processes of which an act of thought may consist ... Verifiability has nothing to do with any images that may be associated with the words of the sentences in question".⁴⁴

In trying so hard to avoid any form of psychologism, Schlick may have opened the door to another form of scepticism about analytic truths that has become prevalent in the last thirty years. Verifiability is supposedly independent of mental processes, images, empirical data, etc. All that it involves is ascertaining if the rules of language by which terms are defined and relations stipulated have been followed. The rules, as we are told, are not laws of nature to be discovered by empirical linguists. They are man-made arbitrary rules set out by the language users.

Then how does one find out what the rules are, and whether they have been followed? Regarding statements in the natural human language, it often takes some empirical research, and some imagination

⁴¹ Schlick, "Meaning and Verification", in *Gesammelte Aufsätze*, pp. 348-349.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 349.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 354.

to tell what is being said. Since usages change, and the ways rules are applied change, sentences that look like nonsense on first inspection can turn out to be meaningful and verifiable. Apparent factual statements can turn out to be disguised tautologies and apparent tautologies can turn out to be assertions of factual claims. A form of scepticism about interpretation of language that goes back to Cratylus, and is developed in Sextus Empiricus's attack on the rhetoricians, seems relevant. So-called nonsense statements, such as those used in Lewis Carroll's "Jabberwocky" become verifiable statements when one reads Carroll's rules for forming his terms in the preface to "The Hunting of the Snark".

As some contemporary philosophers from Quine onward have been arguing, it is not clear that one can determine which statements are analytic and which synthetic without some empirical (often psychological) data. Though not reviving the problem of the reliability of memory in ascertaining what is logically true, Quine and others have sought to show that it is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to draw a precise distinction between analytic and synthetic statements. It takes some empirical information to know that "Cicero" and "Tully" name the same individual. And so, it is claimed, it takes some extra-linguistic data to tell whether or not to classify a statement as analytic. Hamlet's line "To be or not to, that is the question" is not mixing up a tautology with a language fact, if taken in context. In the play it raises a most serious point about human existence and human values, and is, of course, followed by a set of examples about the basic choices that Hamlet is confronting and considering. If we just take statements with no contextual apparatus, can we even then tell if they are analytic? Maybe one can say they are if certain definitions and rules apply. Under these conditions, would we need any extra-linguistic data to evaluate the statements? It could be argued that two sceptical elements still enter in—one, that of ascertaining what definitions and rules apply, and the other of ascertaining if these definitions and rules have been correctly applied. One might say that a statement, once properly understood, states a necessary truth. Hence, the antecedent educational, psychological events do not matter in evaluating whether the statement is analytic. But Quine and his followers have been suggesting that one cannot draw such a sharp line between the historical context and the resultant interpreted statement: "in general the truth of statements does obviously depend both upon language and upon extra-linguistic fact; and we noted that this obvious circumstance carries in its train, not logically but all too naturally, a feeling that the truth of a statement is somehow analyzable into a linguistic component and a factual component.

The factual component must, if we are empiricists, boil down to a range of confirmatory experiences. In the extreme case where the linguistic component is all that matters, a true statement is analytic. But I hope we are now impressed with how stubbornly the distinction between analytic and synthetic has resisted any straightforward drawing".⁴⁵

Without exploring the many, many discussions that have been offered since Quine presented his paper, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism" at the American Philosophical Association meeting in Toronto in December 1950, let us just note that the question of whether or not analytic statements and synthetic ones can be sharply and precisely distinguished has become a major issue in contemporary philosophy. Thus the solid ground on which Schlick and Carnap and other logical positivists thought they were standing on has turned out to be a bit shaky. And if the delineation of analytic judgments is not certain, then what of Schlick's prior points about our ability to recognize identity experiences and the occurrence of experiences of self-evidence on such occasions?

If the question of whether two concepts or terms are identical possibly involves some extra-linguistic facts, then how reliable is the occurrence of the identity experience in identifying identities? This can then be pressed with regard to the basic *facts* that Schlick contended precede all doubts, those involving the unity of consciousness and some continuity of ideas. One could dispute whether Schlick really identified some basic facts that lie beyond all question. But, even if one agreed with him about this, do these *facts* provide any guarantee of certain knowledge? Maybe they are basic conditions of our thinking which lead us to believe in the reliability of some of our thoughts, when such reliability is not justified. This, of course, opens up vast areas of sceptical questioning. I raise this much just to suggest that the sceptic could work backwards from Quine's doubts to re-raising those of Hume and Descartes. Schlick could point out, as he did, that to take such doubts seriously, would make rational discourse impossible. And the sceptic could reply that he does not know if such discourse is or is not possible, but what passes for it hardly deserves the name.

Schlick launched the era of logical positivism attacking both the metaphysicians and the sceptics. Both have again risen from their purported graves. Schlick's attempt to defeat scepticism is one of the most serious ventures of its kind presented in this century. But its

⁴⁵ Willard V. O. Quine, "Two Dogmas of Empiricism", in *From a Logical Point of View* (New York: Harper and Row, 1961), p. 41.

strengths and its weaknesses have helped to form our present intellectual world. The fact that discussions of the merits and demerits of scepticism form such a large part of present philosophical writings indicates that the issue Schlick sought to confront and overcome remains with us. Examining how Schlick attempted to do this may aid in dealing with current concerns. And seeing how the central points for him, the unquestionable character of analytic statements, has been questioned, can help us in taking note of some of the basic points that need to be considered, if the sceptical dragon is ever actually to be slain.

XVII

THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY PHILOSOPHY

It is an exceedingly great pleasure to participate in the twenty-fifth anniversary issue of the *Journal of the History of Philosophy*. The editor, Professor Makkreel, offered me the opportunity to discuss the rationale for my present research, which I hope has some relevance for future research in the history of philosophy.

At a symposium at the American Philosophical Association meeting in Washington in December 1985, I argued for taking the *history* of philosophy seriously, that is, understanding thinkers and ideas in their actual historical contexts, instead of detaching them into some ahistorical ethereal realm. I argued that one could not make sense of a philosopher's thought detached from his time and circumstances. His ideas could not be understood unless one took account of the language, usages, the issues and the concerns of the thinker and his time. The all too frequent "reconstructions" of philosophers' thoughts see them instead as logical machines, simply moving from clearly stated premises to their logical consequences. As many of us have sought to show, this often grossly distorts what Descartes, Spinoza, Locke, Leibniz and others might have actually thought, and misses much of what they were probably thinking about.

I should like to carry this theme further by examining the need to take seriously the religious aspect of philosophizing. I will center on the intellectual scene in the seventeenth century, which I am currently working on, though I believe many of the same points could be made about any period in the history of philosophy.

Among historians of science there is an ongoing debate about whether the history of the subject should be studied internally or externally. The internalists examine a set of ideas presented by scientist A, and trace their use or development by scientist B. The study that results is primarily the tracing of the course of a set of ideas through a time period. Background data about the scientists, their problems, and their place in society are regarded as of little importance. The externalists insist that one cannot understand why various questions become important, why various individuals tried to solve them, why they used certain kinds of possible solutions instead of others, etc., unless one knows the external conditions of the time. This

has spawned a lot of interesting research into the way scientific studies went on, who supported them, who did them, how they got accepted, and so on. The sociology and even anthropology of science is now a thriving research area, yielding many amazing studies about the scientific world and how it functioned. In so doing, scholars have not just examined the great successful scientists, the Keplers, Galileos, Harveys, and Newtons, but also the small fry, the mediocre, the poor scientists, and even the incompetent ones. They have examined why wrong-headed theories were supported, and accepted, while evidence supporting other theories was readily available. Their concern with the actual course of scientific development as an ongoing part of intellectual history is vital to understanding the scientific world of today, which plays such overwhelming role in our society. So, some people study the education of the good, the mediocre, the bad scientists, their relative social statuses, incomes, and so on. The religious concerns are, of course, an obvious part of the story from Copernicus to Kepler to Newton to Darwin to Freud to Einstein. The scientists were involved in an ongoing religious world that influenced the role of science. The above-named scientists had their religious or irreligious views that were involved with their scientific concerns. And, as we know too well, the impact of their work on religion has been of great importance to the broader intellectual world, and the impact of religion on the acceptance of their science has been and is part of the ongoing intellectual world.

The interest amongst historians of science in the sociology, psychology, and anthropology of science has hardly rubbed off on the historians of philosophy. Most of the leading scholars of the last few decades in this work are hardly known and rarely cited in studies in the history of philosophy. We seem to have a limited interest in the external details or possible connections between the historical philosophers we study and their thought. We are slowly getting around to having available complete scholarly editions of the major seventeenth-century figures. The Locke and Leibniz editions are nearing completion. A new Hobbes edition is about to be undertaken. A new edition of Bacon, including some recently discovered papers, is being planned. Descartes, Spinoza, and Malebranche have been done and touched up. The secondary figures such as Gassendi, Arnauld, Henry More, Cudworth, Bayle, will probably have to wait for a long, long time while we use photoreproductions of their seventeenth-century texts.

Not only are we doing little to establish a base of texts, we are doing less to connect these figures with their backgrounds. The biography of Descartes available today is basically the one written by

Baillet in the late seventeenth century, the biography of Spinoza is basically the two earliest ones of Colerus and Lucas from the end of the seventeenth century. Only a small effort is being made to expand our knowledge of these thinkers as personalities who reacted with the ongoing world of their time. Bacon, Hobbes, and Locke were sufficiently involved with English politics, so we have been forced to see them in this background. But Hobbes wrote his most important works in France, and we have only a superficial picture of Hobbes's activities in the French world of the time. We have turned history around, so we see Queen Christina and Princess Elisabeth as significant only because of their involvements with Descartes, and we do not consider what they were up to, and why they cared at all about Descartes or his ideas. We have accepted all sorts of mythology about our heroes rather than examine the actual historical data.

In saying all of this I am not yet ready to advocate that we follow the historians of science fully, and plunge into the social, political, and economic background of the history of philosophy. Obviously a certain class of people did philosophy, or wrote books on it. What they did was related to the academic worlds of their time, to their patrons' interests, and so on. And they had to find a means of livelihood while they philosophized. As humans they were no doubt influenced by what was going on, and they considered who would appreciate their theories among the influential as well as the intellectual community. So, there is plenty to be explored. The dimension that concerns me especially, in terms of my current research interest, is the religious aspect of seventeenth-century philosophy. And this aspect, I believe, is inseparable from the philosophical developments of the period.

The seventeenth century was dominated by religious struggles—the Thirty Years War to determine whether Europe would be Catholic or Protestant, the English Civil War, the expulsion of all the Huguenots from France, the Turkish incursions into central Europe. All our heroes were affected by these developments. We give lip service by just recording that Descartes was a Catholic, Spinoza a Jew, Leibniz a Lutheran, Malebranche a Catholic, Locke and Hobbes Protestants, and leave it at that. But as they all knew, religious issues dominated their worlds. People were jailed and killed for religious mistakes and misbehavior, not for bad philosophy.

One way of seeing what I am driving at is to realize we have selected a small group of thinkers *because* of their connections with what we are presently concerned with in philosophy, principally theory of knowledge and metaphysics of matter and mind. We have truncated what they wrote and thought to focus on what became important to

Hume and Kant and Hegel, and to Russell, Wittgenstein, and Heidegger. But much or most of what any of them wrote about was involved with the religious issues of the time, with religious and anti-religious attitudes, specific beliefs, creeds, religious evidences and religious interpretations of the latest findings of human knowledge. What they wrote may have been sincere or insincere, but it is part of their work. And to judge how important it was to the author, we have to assess his or her role in the religious world of the time.

Since we have made the epistemological issues so important, and examine them so carefully, we have to consider, for example, why the problem of whether an atheist can *know* mathematics became such a real issue for Descartes and others. In terms of his philosophy, Descartes had made all knowledge dependent on God's will, and made God the guarantor of all knowledge. Was this just a ploy to complete his system, or was God so central for Descartes? The issue of the atheist mathematician points up the problem sharply. Most of us would say that mathematical knowledge and the realization of its truth depends solely on human rationality. We do not happen to know if Euclid, Eudoxus of Cnidos, Archimedes, etc., etc. had any religious beliefs. We do know they were important mathematicians who proved very significant theorems. Descartes's answer that the atheist-mathematician can do mathematics, but can never be sure his results are really true, seems strange to a contemporary reader, but was it strange in 1641? Would it have been strange to the Catholic Oratorians upon whom Descartes relied for support? Was it strange to young Spinoza for whom all certainty followed from knowledge of God? And, were there atheist-mathematicians at the time?

The seventeenth century was obviously a battleground of different religious convictions. The institutional ones were struggling for control of people, territory, and centers of learning. Currents from the Italian Renaissance, the naturalism of Bruno and Vanini, currents from the religious debates incorporated in Bodin's unpublished and unpublishable *Colloquium Heptaplomares* presented a deist or even atheist possibility. Currents from Judaism became known in the universities, the theological centers, and the tolerant worlds of Amsterdam and Venice, and raised critical questions about the truth of Christianity. And the bitter conflicts between Catholic and Protestant thinkers over the proper rule of faith, raised all sorts of sceptical dilemmas.

The mathematician, the scientist, and the philosopher lived and worked in a world in which the theologians and their positions dominated the intellectual scene. The theological dominance reflected the importance of religious issues to the societies of the time, issues

ranging from the way people should know God's word and wishes, the way they should be involved with Him, to the specific, now trivial formulations of prayers, creeds, and social activities. Scholars rummaged through the newly discovered Jewish literature, especially the Mishna, the Talmud, and the Kabbala, and the commentaries thereon, for clues to understanding the exact nature of Judaism then and now, and the clues about the culmination of Jewish and Christian history unfolding all around. I think one cannot overestimate how much the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation and the new Jewish Messianism of Isaac Luria in Palestine, convinced many leading thinkers that was happening in the religious upheavals—the wars with the Turks, the expansion of Europe all over the globe, the reappearance of the Jews, at least in Amsterdam and Venice, as intellectual contacts, the outburst of new knowledge were all signs that Divine History was reaching its culmination. The created world, as described in *Genesis*, was drawing to its conclusion as described in *Daniel* and *Revelation*. Thus an understanding of this world was an understanding of a world about to be transformed.

A Descartes or a Galileo might look for fixed laws for understanding this world, but each knew that such understanding would be expected to square with Mosaic physics and Divine history. Pascal could see the triviality of doing physics when man's eternal fate was about to be decided. Descartes became a villain in Pascal's eyes for suggesting that the God of the philosophers, the one who could be known clearly and distinctly (if not adequately), could replace the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of history and in history. Those later in the century, like John Toland or various Cartesian-oriented French Protestants in Holland, wanted to make the clarity and distinctiveness of ideas the measure of what one should believe about God and His relations with the world, were declared heretics by a French reformed Synod and by the Anglican theologian-philosopher, Edward Stillingfleet.

Purely epistemologically justifiable knowledge of God was obviously inadequate if one was convinced that He had revealed and was revealing the nature and the course of the world through special signs and activities. The God of history, many intellectuals were convinced, was opening the seals on the ultimate books of knowledge about God, nature and man. Stillingfleet, in this context, saw that Cartesian and empirical knowledge tests applied to religion would destroy any specific knowledge claims of Judaism and Christianity, except for the deist element, that there is or may be, a God.

It is interesting that at a climactic moment in seventeenth-century European thought, when Christians became aware of the claim that

the Jewish Messiah had arrived in the person of Sabbatai Zevi in Turkey, the first statement of this by a Christian believer in the new Messiah was by Spinoza's patron, Peter Serrarius, who wrote the news to John Dury, the leader of the movement to reunite the churches to prepare for the Second Coming of Christ. (Dury was *au courant* about the new science and the new philosophy, being Robert Boyle's uncle and Henry Oldenburg's father-in-law, and receiving regular reports from the latter.) Serrarius told Dury that two important things had happened, the King of the Jews had arrived, and a book had appeared saying that Scripture should be judged by philosophical standards. This is Louis Meyer's work that appeared with Spinoza's *Principles of Descartes's Philosophy*. Serrarius joyfully accepted the first and became the leading European Christian follower of Sabbatai Zevi. He rejected the second and wrote a scathing attack on the notion that Scripture could be trivialized to a philosophical level. Dury, more moderate perhaps, accepted Sabbatai Zevi as the King of the Jews for their Jewish state, presumably to be established in Palestine. As King of the Jews he would be subservient to the Sultan in Turkey, the ruler of that part of world. Dury was most concerned about the use of philosophy in interpreting Scripture, and saw both horrendous possibilities, as well as realizing the need to use philosophical tools to combat false readings of Scripture. (All of this appears in a document I just found in July 1986 in the Staatsarchiv in Zürich.) Dury and Serrarius discussed the subsequent rise and fall of the Sabbatai Zevi movement pretty calmly, and tried to evaluate its significance for divine history. For Serrarius it was the beginning of the Millennium. For Dury it was a divine warning that the Protestants had to get their act together to help the Jews find their way to the ultimate reunion of the Jews and the Christians during the immediately forthcoming Reign of Jesus on Earth. They both saw, however, that the philosophically based reading of Scripture was a radical challenge that posed grave dangers and might lead people to damnation.

For many theologians, including Dury and Serrarius, the new science was part of a progressive revelation, available to the "new man", the enlightened one of the new era. This gives us a deeper understanding of many of the thinkers of the seventeenth century, a realization of what they took as the new knowledge, how they believed they had obtained it, and what knowing it and using it was going to accomplish. We have restricted the new knowledge to what became the main lines of physics and astronomy from Copernicus to Newton, but many seventeenth-century scientists included magical findings, spiritual forces, Jewish secrets, philological clues about the

original language of Adam (in which everything was named according to its essence) as co-equal parts of what wise men knew. Studies of the mixture of occult and scientific lore accepted by Bacon, Kepler, Comenius, Henry More, Leibniz, Newton and others indicate that the seventeenth-century intellectuals had not weeded out what we would count as scientific from the non-scientific or irrational, partly because of the religious views through which they interpreted new theories and data.

Unfortunately, it is still fashionable to divide seventeenth-century thinkers into empiricist and rationalists, and to spell out a theory of knowledge that Bacon, Gassendi, Locke and Newton shared, a theory radically different from that which Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz and Malebranche shared, and a muddled mix that Hobbes, Henry More, Ralph Cudworth, and other Cambridge Platonists accepted. However one defines "empiricist" or "rationalist", scholars have found empirical elements in the theories of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Malebranche, and the Cambridge Platonists, and rationalist aspects in the thought of the so-called "British empiricists". This indicates that these categories may not be too helpful. But I think it indicates more—namely that theories put forth by seventeenth-century philosophers about how knowledge is gained are much more complex, and contain elements that make sense in terms of the religious backgrounds of the philosophers, not in terms of purely philosophical views. In practically every case one finds elements that have to be ignored (if one is to preserve the simple philosophical dichotomy), explained away as irrelevant anachronisms, or taken seriously in the light of the religious positions of the time. Descartes's rationalism allows for the irrational possibility that 2 plus 2 can equal 5 tomorrow if God so wills, or that God and angels know "p" is true, while we are forced to believe by God, through clear and distinct ideas that "not-p" is true. Is this to be ignored, like Descartes's preface to the *Meditations*, as a means of placating the Catholic bigots of his time; or is it to be written off as a bit of irrelevant flourish to satisfy theologians like Mersenne or Arnauld? Or is it part of Descartes's basic religio-philosophical theory of knowledge—that God is all-powerful? This leads, as in voluntarists from the late Middle Ages to the seventeenth-century Counter-Reformation Augustinians, like Cardinal Bérulle, a patron of Descartes, to the view that God is the sole cause of truth, and what is true is what God so wills, and God's will cannot be determined outside of Himself.

Spinoza's counter view—that as soon as one understands nature one then knows all truths, such as mathematical ones, which nec-

essarily follow from His nature is out of a quite different religious-philosophical system. Descartes saves man and himself from complete scepticism by throwing us all at the mercy of a God who cannot deceive (though we cannot be sure what a deception would be). Spinoza insists that the self-revealing character of the idea of God eliminates even the possibility of sceptical doubt in the person who knows God.

Before discussing what may be involved in the different basic epistemologies of Descartes, the Catholic, and Spinoza, the ex-Jew, now a semi-Quaker, semi-creedless Collegiant, let me digress to one more point about Descartes and Spinoza. Why did they call the works where they first fully presented their theories, *Meditations* and *Ethics*? Neither was a usual title for philosophical treatise, and neither is presented in a usual manner. In fact, both are really journeys of the mind to God, Descartes's more in the tradition of St. Bonaventure, and Spinoza's more in the tradition of Leone Hebreo's dialogues on love. Who wrote meditations? Marcus Aurelius. Cardinal Bérulle wrote spiritual meditations. Descartes's version is much like a combination of the Jesuit Ignatius Loyola's *Spiritual Exercises*, and Bérulle's work, the two sources of Descartes's religious training. There are many works in the Jewish tradition that amount to practical ethics, which is hardly the meat of Spinoza's work. But there is something more than suggestive in the fact that one of the first interpretations of the *Ethics*, by Bayle, by Jacques Basnage and by Wachter and Moses Germanus, all around 1700, was that it was Eastern philosophy and/or Kabbala. Basnage claimed the intellectuals in the Amsterdam Jewish community, many of whom had known Spinoza, insisted his views were kabbalistic and that he wrote *more geometrico* to make it look like he was original. The dramatic rise to the intellectual love of God is certainly in the Kabbalistic tradition. The sort of *unio mystica* of the final proposition echoes Oriental thought, Spanish New Christian mysticism of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz, and the medieval and Lurianic Kabbalists. The Oriental vision were just becoming known in Europe. Spanish mysticism, as well as the Protestant mysticism of Jacob Boehme (called "the god-taught philosopher") and the Kabbalism rampant in Jewish and Christian circles in the Lowlands, could all have colored Spinoza's views, and colored those of his contemporaries trying to understand him and reject him.

How was one supposed to learn about God in the seventeenth century? What we have kept as an answer, is the proofs of the existence of God of Descartes, Spinoza, Leibniz, Locke, Malebranche and Newton. One could broaden this to include Bacon, Grotius, Herbert of Cherbury, Henry More and a few others. One would find there are

versions of the ontological argument, the cosmological and the teleological ones. The versions of the first and the second are not excitingly new, compared with their medieval precursors. In both Descartes and Spinoza one has to know the idea of God, and then it is necessary consequence that God exists. The development of the teleological argument is more interesting since it reflects the growth of scientific knowledge during the century. Newton's *General Scholium* in the *Principia* clearly indicates that when one has understood the scientific universe according to the new mathematized natural philosophy, one will see that there must be a God who designs and governs the whole physical cosmos. From Grotius, who offered an argument from design for Dutch sailors to think about as they sailed the seven seas, to Newton, knowledge of nature leads to knowing that God exists. But for Newton, More, Locke, Grotius and others, knowledge of God did not begin and end with this argument. The knowledge that was important, that guided one's life and transformed one's being, was of another order. It could be gained only by those with proper morality, a willingness to listen, a seriousness, in contrast to the libertine, crass, immoral person, who would only at best become a deist.

The moral or spiritual dimension was critical to gaining religious knowledge. What happened next took many forms: the God-taught knowledge of Jacob Boehme, the mystical enlightenment of the Spanish mystics and the Kabbalists, the inner light of Quakers, the light of reason of the Cambridge Platonists, the fideism of Pascal, each claiming some relationship between the truth seeker and an ongoing religious teaching found in Scripture and pronouncements of religious leaders or teachers. Significant knowledge depended on one's spiritual ability to find and recognize it not on the logical tricks of the proofs of the philosophers. For those whose spirits were perverse or depressed, Bruno's *Triumphant Beast*, Bodin's dialogues, or the infamous *Three Imposters* (Moses, Jesus, and Mohammed) would seem plausible.

In one way or another a wide variety of thinkers held that one's moral and spiritual condition affected the process of gaining knowledge, and that the most important knowledge could only be gained by spiritually regenerated persons, or morally highly improved ones. Even Descartes and Spinoza set forth a *morale provisoire* as the precondition of the search for truth, and made the acquisition of significant knowledge dependent on knowledge of God. For most seventeenth-century thinkers, excepting Spinoza, such knowledge involved the natural and revealed truth found in the Book of Nature and the Word of God: science and Scripture. The seventeenth-century variants on this theme account for an amazing amount of what we

now brush aside in the texts of our past heroes. Understanding the various positions from different perspectives can be most revealing, as in the Arnauld-Leibniz debate, the Locke-Stillingfleet one, and many others.

To make my point in another way, I have been trying for over thirty years to show that the development of modern philosophy grew out of the sceptical crisis of the late Renaissance and Reformation period, and that this crisis arose in large measure because of the fundamental issues raised concerning the grounds of religious knowledge, and the criterion of religious truth. My more recent preoccupation with Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarian thought has some continuity with the initial investigation of the sceptical crisis that began with Erasmus's clash with Luther over the basis of religious knowledge, and the certitude it can have. One line from this that I have traced is the Cartesian struggle with scepticism in which the search for certainty became the central philosophical issue. Another line, involving the effect of the revival of the texts of Sextus Empiricus and of Cicero's *Academica*, appears strangely (at least to those unaccustomed to taking seventeenth-century theology seriously) in some of those seeking the TRUTH in Biblical prophecies. Starting with the very pious and very learned Joseph Mede at Cambridge, to Henry More, Comenius, Anne Conway, and Sir Isaac Newton, they all tried to deal with a radical skepticism through accepting Biblical prophecies, and through accepting a new world of scientific thought grounded in, or justified by a realization that the prophetic picture in the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*, was the actual world they were living in. As Daniel has said, knowledge would increase as mankind approached the final climax of human history. And it was certainly increasing throughout the seventeenth century.

It was four years ago that I saw how the Millenarian views of these thinkers fitted together with their concern to overcome skepticism and explain the new science. Quite a while ago I had noted that Joseph Mede, the author of the *Key to the Apocalypse*, had read Sextus Empiricus when a freshman at Cambridge in 1603, and that he had become a complete Pyrrhonian until he discovered the key to the Books of *Daniel* and *Revelation*. At the time, a decade or so ago, when I was still a compulsive book buyer, I bought Mede's work, because it was mentioned somewhere that he was a Pyrrhonist early in his career. I found the mention, but saw no connection between this and the rest of what I was working on. I added Mede to the people who dealt with Pyrrhonism in the 1979 edition of my *History of Skepticism*, gave him a hearty sentence, and let it go at that.

Four years ago I was reviewing a new book on the minor skeptic, Joseph Glanvill, who died in 1680. I had written a few papers on him early in my career. In one of them I had claimed that he was a precursor of Hume's in that he stated Hume's chief arguments about the non-existence of causal knowledge. He had argued, eighty years before Hume, that no matter of fact is necessary, that things could always be otherwise, and that what we took for causal knowledge was concomitancy, constant conjunction. The authoress of the new book on Glanvill, Sascha Talmor, denied my contention that Glanvill was a precursor of Hume's. She granted that he came to the same conclusions, but she argued he had a radically different conception of what the world was like and how it operated. And she pointed out that he believed in the active agency of spirits and witches. I realized she had a very good point, which if pursued, indicated Glanvill was not an empiricist. His world was made up of spirit, matter and God. He was challenging the dogmatism of Descartes and Hobbes, in order to reveal the world of his Cambridge Platonist master, Henry More. Glanvill's skepticism, which was worked out in great detail, was quite important as the most complete statement of the mitigated skepticism of the members of the Royal Society, which was aimed at justifying or reinforcing a kind of religious faith in keeping with modern science.

I moved back from thinking about Glanvill to perusing his mentor, Henry More. I found that when he went to Cambridge in 1631, he went through a sceptical crisis far more severe than what Descartes described. More studied with Joseph Mede, and finally found his moorings when he read the *Theologia Germanica*, an unimpressive mystical work that had earlier transformed the young Martin Luther. More became the first English follower of Descartes and then his most severe English critic, and wrote work after work presenting what Hume called an incurable skepticism, a doubt of our faculties, overcome by faith in God. This then led to a scientific and religious understanding of the world in which More claimed that the three great truths of the first chapters of *Genesis* were that the earth moves, the blood circulates through the body, and souls preexist. From this More went on to argue for a new physics of spirits and matter, operating in a historical universe created by God around 4004 B.C. and rapidly moving to its conclusion as described in *Daniel* and *Revelation*. More worked on his spiritualized physics with his private student, Lady Anne Conway, whose theosophical book, Leibniz claimed, gave him the idea for his theory of monads. More worked with his student and colleague, Newton, on explaining the books of *Daniel* and *Revelation* until they had a falling out in 1680 over how to interpret some of the

symbolism. More, Anne Conway, Rabbi Isaac Abendana, plus, the alchemical doctor, Van Helmont, worked with Knorr von Rosenroth on the Latin collection of Kabbalistic texts that were read by Leibniz, Newton, Locke and many others. And Newton's metaphysics of space and of the cosmos came directly from More and from the Kabbalistic treatises.

All of this is only a brief part of this story but is an illustration of some of the religious background. When I started putting this in chronological order, and using hitherto unpublished materials in England and Holland, I found that the very pious Joseph Mede had calmly come to the conclusion around 1615-20, that the world would come to an end around 1650-60, with the Conversion of their Jews, the return of Jesus and his thousand year reign on Earth. Mede, I say, calmly came to this conclusion. He published nothing at the time and stayed apart from the religious controversies engulfing Cambridge. A Puritan theologian, William Twisse, who later led the Puritan divines during the Revolution, found Mede and gradually got him to exposit his new understanding of what was going on in a series of letters and essays. Mede was also discovered by Samuel Hartlib, an amazing busybody who came to England from central Europe around 1630. Hartlib sent Mede's papers to the people he knew would be interested—the leader of the Moravian Church, Jan Amos Comenius, the Scotch Millenarian, John Dury, and many others. Mede died in 1638, having published only his *Key to the Apocalypse*. The circulation of his letters and essays helped create a spiritual brotherhood stretching from Poland, Sweden, Germany, Holland, France, and Switzerland to New England. The members of this spiritual brotherhood interacted in various ways with Descartes, Mersenne, Spinoza and many other so-called normal philosophers. Dury met Descartes at Princess Elisabeth's weekly tea. The Father of Modern Philosophy was writing the *Discourse on Method*. Dury tried to convince Descartes that certainty could only be found in Biblical prophecies. Comenius had a summit conference with Descartes in 1642, in a castle in Holland, and came away convinced that Descartes did not clearly understand the Scripture, and Descartes came away convinced that Comenius did not know enough mathematics. Comenius was working on plans for developing universal knowledge, whose achievement would herald the onset of the Millennium. He tried to set up a college for universal knowledge in London in 1641, but political problems got in the way. He was offered the presidency of Harvard to make it an experimental college where Indians and colonists would achieve *pansophia* together. Several members of the spiritual brotherhood, which came to include

Robert Boyle and Henry Oldenburg, among others, became friends of the rabbi of Amsterdam, Menasseh ben Israel, and with the young Baruch de Spinoza.

In relating these details, I am trying to suggest that the lines of development and influence clearly show the importance of the religious background for the philosophical developments of the period, for not only how knowledge is sought, but also what it is about. We usually ignore most of the above and single out a few problems, the relation of mind and body, the problem of establishing the existence of the external world, the proofs of the existence of God. Students and professors are intrigued by the Cartesian Circle, by whether Descartes cheated in the *cogito* and in his claims about God not being a deceiver, and so on. Fine. But in restricting the focus of interest, one has to omit or avoid discussions about religion and theology in the Cartesian corpus and the writings of the others of the time.

Well, I am told, we are only interested in the basic philosophical issue. But, how do we tell what that is? If it is what present day philosophers in England and America worry about and write about, then why drag up the religio-philosophical bones of the seventeenth-century thinkers? Well, we're told that is where the issues started, but they need to be stated more carefully, by something called the "rational reconstruction" of seventeenth-century texts to truncate them into twentieth-century molds. But why bother? Why not do what our scientific colleagues do? They do not read Newton, or make their students read him. They "know" Newton offered an inferior symbolism, and presented the scientific case in a confusing manner. So, Newtonian physics is presented without disturbing Newton, and is presented in twentieth-century terminology and mathematics. The historians of science can read Newton and worry about why he introduced metaphysical issues, and why more than half of what he wrote is about strictly religious matters and alchemical matters, including the interpretation of *Daniel* and *Revelation*, but scientists and science students can stay in a twentieth-century context with twentieth-century ideas.

For reasons that I do not understand, philosophers seem to need to construct their picture of what they are doing in terms of a historical story that runs from Descartes to Hume and Kant. This story forms the background for the burning issues in our contemporary journals and conferences. The story has by now gotten too slight in terms of the complexities of contemporary logic and linguistic philosophy. Some, seeing this, have decided philosophy is dead, because nothing of interest can come out of the story.

However, why should past philosophers be victimized by limiting their interest and importance to our present concerns? Some present

thinkers would take umbrage at my term, "victimize", and say that they find the study and examination and "rational reconstruction" of argument in past philosophers, sheds light on present day problems. Fine! But why restrict the study, examination and "rational reconstruction" to just a small part of the text? (And, unfortunately, most of Descartes, Leibniz, Arnauld, Bayle, and Malebranche has never been translated into English.)

Put another way, if one wants to understand the major or minor seventeenth-century thinkers as historical figures struggling with the problems of their time, then I think one has to delve into their context, and not just ours. When one does, one finds a major aspect of their context is the religious issues involved with what we now isolate as philosophical issues. And, I do not have to belabor the point that for seventeenth-century thinkers it was more important to be right on religious issues than on purely philosophical ones, far more important in terms of one's survival now and in a possible afterlife. A philosophical error was not heresy. A religious error was, and had dire consequences in various religious contexts. At this range we may not be sure about the actual religious convictions of various seventeenth-century thinkers, but I think we cannot avoid seeing that they were all dealing with problems in religious contexts. So, I think if one wants to understand why Descartes dealt with certain issues, why he made certain claims that now seem unrelated to his philosophy, one has to look into the religious background of his time. One has to consider the Counter-Reformation theology he learned from the Jesuits at La Flèche, the Augustinianism he imbibed from the Oratorians, the fear of being mixed up with the Jansenist Augustinians like Arnauld, or the Calvinist Augustinians at Utrecht, or being associated with the various non-Catholic heretics he encountered in Holland. Descartes's manoeuvres amongst the religious positions of the time are apparent in his correspondence and his way of dealing with opponents. His involvement in religious issues followed after death, in the long quarrel about whether he could be buried in the holy soil of Catholic France after dying in Protestant Sweden.

Hobbes's career was very involved with religious matters. He fled England because of the religious revolution going on. He returned from exile eleven years later, unable to find a position in either the Puritan or Restoration world. And he presented a new theory of society as a way of settling religious disputes with the minimum of violence. He was so anxious to settle these that he was willing to let the political sovereign dictate religious, political, scientific and mathematical truth, while Hobbes himself was presenting the germs of modern Biblical criticism.

Spinoza's world was inordinately imbedded in religious concerns and problems. His Jewish world and his rebellion from it, which we are just beginning to understand, his involvements with the Quakers, the Millenarians and the Collegiants, all formed part of the context of his thinking. He was far more than just a renegade Jew who became a consistent Cartesian. During his intellectual career he was trying to interpret Judaism and Christianity so that they were not threatening to intellectual activity, but rather were parts of a policy that could make society humane and maybe even moral. And I think that the vision of him as the great atheist, and as the God-intoxicated man show how important his religious or irreligious background was.

One could go on about the significance of Leibniz's irenicism (which incidentally began just as Dury gave up after forty-five years of trying, because the German Lutherans would no longer have anything to do with him). One could consider Leibniz's millenarian ideas, his theodicy, his interest in the new Kabbalism, and so on. Do we have to have two, or maybe three, or four Leibnizes to make him compatible, or can we see all of this as part of the religious context of his ideas?

One could go on about Locke's many discussions about the reasonableness of Christianity, his interest and concern about the debate over the truth of Christianity between the Jew, Orobio de Castro, and the Christian, Philip van Limborch, his discussions with Newton about the interpretations of the prophecies in Scripture, and his concern about the rising Biblical criticism of Hobbes, Spinoza, and Richard Simon, and about Locke, a key figure in Anglican latitudinarianism.

One could show the obvious religious side of each of these figures, plus that of Pascal, Henry More, Gassendi, Bayle and so on. What I think is important is that whether or not each of these believed X, Y, or Z, they operated in a context in which the mysticism and the new Scholastic logic of the Counter-Reformation was important, the Protestant search for certainty, its Biblicism and its direct access to truth, the Jewish views of Christianity and history, and the Jewish Kabbala, all played significant roles. None of our seventeenth-century heroes lived in an ivory tower, not even Spinoza. They lived in the world of the religious struggles going on in and among Judaism, Catholicism and Protestantism. They lived until almost the end of the century with the possibility of a Moslem conquest of Europe, and the drastic changes in life-style that would involve. They all lived on patronage (even Spinoza) and depended on the good will of political and religious leaders. For some like Pascal, More, or Newton, the quest for religious truth was central and overriding. If we want to

understand them, and not just ourselves, we have to try to get into their world, in which religion, for good or ill, played a monumental role. And it may be, when we see Descartes, Hobbes, Spinoza, Malebranche, Leibniz, and Locke and the others as philosophers in a religious world in crisis, it may help us find ways of dealing with our own world in moral and spiritual crisis. Some may find Newton pouring over the Book of *Revelation* for sixty years a historical oddity. Others may find that his fixation that history makes sense a basis for understanding our present. Others may find Spinoza's reduction of religion to politics helps us understand some of what is going on now. In any case the religious background of seventeenth-century thought should give us a clearer picture of why these thinkers dealt with the issues they did, and sought certain kinds of solutions.

The dispute between Bayle on the one hand, and Leibniz, Jean le Clerc and a host of others on the other hand, on whether "religious truth is above reason" means "religious truth is against, or opposed to reason", provides an all-important entry into the new status of religion in the Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment worlds. The "fideism" of Bayle or the "reasonable" Christianity of Locke or Leibniz, or the post-Christianity of Voltaire and Lessing, are outlooks that emerged from the great struggle of the ideas of the time. And these outlooks resulted from problems we may not take as seriously, or as literally or facetiously as they did, but are outlooks that have played important roles in the last three centuries. Seeing these thinkers as genuine historical characters is obviously better than seeing them as caricatures. And they become better or worse guides when we see them in context.

As a last point, may I just mention that the quest for the religious background of seventeenth-century thought is really in its infancy. Vast amounts of untapped materials exist in Europe and America and documents by and about major figures remain to be explored. The minor people, if studied, can tell us much about the major ones. The huge correspondences of people like the Bishop Pierre-Daniel Huet (1630-1721) who knew most of the important people in Western Europe in person or by correspondence, can give us much data on developments in the Republic of Letters. The correspondence of Hartlib, of Dury (which is all over Europe) the discussion and disputations at the universities, provide much insight into what was being taken seriously, and how and why.

If we and our students endeavor to examine some of this material, endeavor to find the religious context of philosophical discussions, I think we will gain much in understanding the history of philosophy

and maybe this will aid in the ongoing philosophical quest. If the religious context is as rich as I suggest—richer than the scientific one, at least for the seventeenth century—perhaps we can find out much more about our own intellectual heritage, and hopefully, much more scholarly work, in term of discovering and editing texts, in term of interpreting the religious contexts. When this is done we may be in a much better position to understand how we actually got from the past to the present. And we may be in a much better position to evaluate the equivalent or analogous situations in which present day thought is enmeshed—our religious and ideological contexts—and how much they shape our concerns, our theories, our visions. In another twenty-five years, the *Journal of the History of Philosophy* may be able to present a far richer picture of our philosophical history.

XVIII

PREDICTING, PROPHECYING, DIVINING AND FORETELLING FROM NOSTRADAMUS TO HUME*

In the two hundred years between the writings of Nostradamus and Hume a radical transformation took place in claims about what knowledge of the future human beings could obtain. At the beginning (and end of the period) the terms “to predict”, “to foretell”, “to prophesise”, “to divine”, were interchangeable. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in the late sixteenth century “to *predict*” meant “to foretell” or “to prophesise”; “to *divine*” meant “to prophecy”, “to foretell” or “to predict”; “to *foretell*” meant “to predict” or “to prophecy”. Only “to prophesise” had an additional meaning involving employing the function or faculty of a prophet making divinely inspired utterances or discourses. In Samuel Johnson’s *Dictionary* of 1756, “to *prophecy*” is “to predict”; “to *foretell*”, “to *foreshow*” is “to prophecy or to utter predictions”, and “to *predict*” is “to foretell and to foreshow”.

These terms were synonymous except that “prophesise” also had a meaning connected with its religious usage. By now, as we all know, scientists predict, as do television weathermen; rather dubious people prophesise, divine or foretell. The history of the change of meaning involved here is, I believe, rather instructive. We will see that up until Hume all these terms could be used interchangeably. However, Hume’s critique of prophecy as a form of miracle, and his denial that people could know the future, involved rejecting a whole framework in which knowledge of the future was a guiding light for human beings in terms of their destiny in a religious drama. I shall trace this development and examine Hume’s views in the light of the theories of prophetic and scientific knowledge of the future being advanced at his time.

I have chosen to begin the story with Nostradamus because he has played an extraordinary role in people’s attempts to know the future, unequalled by anyone outside of the Biblical prophets. The *Oxford English Dictionary* indicates that the first English usage of the

* I should like to thank James E. Force for his helpful discussions and comments on this paper.

word "predict" is from 1561 in a statement about Nostradamus. His prophetic verses have been printed and reprinted, interpreted and reinterpreted over and over again. If one looks at the number of French editions that have appeared, it becomes apparent that with each major new historical event a new edition is put out showing that Nostradamus had predicted it.¹ A new edition, using computer analyses, appeared in France in December 1980. It contained the news that a quatrain of Nostradamus predicted that there would be an attempt to assassinate the Pope. Another quatrain said next year would be the year of the rose. The rose is the symbol of the French Socialist Party. When John Paul II was shot, and when Mitterand and his party won the French elections, this new edition of Nostradamus became a best-seller, selling well over one hundred thousand copies.² When I was in Paris in the summer of 1981, learned articles in the newspapers were discussing whether it was possible that Nostradamus, who died in 1566, could have actually predicted events taking place over four centuries later.

So Nostradamus, unlike a host of long forgotten political forecasters, is still of current interest in some circles. He is also of interest because he made two public efforts to explain how he was able to know the future, one in a letter to his son, and another in a letter to King Henri II. His explanation contains some of the features we will find in Sir Isaac Newton's theory of prophecy, as well as some that are offered by other theorists of future knowledge.

Michael Nostradamus was born in 1503 in southern France. He was the grandson of two prominent rabbis, who raised him. They had quietly converted to Christianity shortly before his birth, when the local ruler offered them a choice of banishment, or becoming Christian noblemen.³ Their grandson was sent to the University of Montpellier to study medicine, then went to Toulouse and Bordeaux. Next he studied astrology, and became a court doctor, astrologer and adviser. He predicted in detail the strange accidental deaths of Kings Henri II and François II, who died in quick succession, in the exact

¹ See the large number of editions listed in the Catalogue of the Bibliothèque Nationale.

² This new edition was done by Jean Charles de Fontbrune, who worked on his interpretation for seventeen years. He claimed to find many predictions about recent and near future events, including the fall of the Shah of Iran, the wars in the Middle East, etc.

³ See the biographical account in M. -C. Touchard, *Nostradamus*, (Paris, 1972), pp. 31-34; "Biography of Nostradamus" in E. Leoni *Nostradamus: Life and Literature* (New York, 1965), pp. 15ff; and the article, "Nostredame, Michel de", in Michaud, *Biographie Universelle*.

way foretold. Nostradamus became world famous. He wrote out his prophecies in the form of sets of one hundred quatrains. They were deliberately written in archaic French and in a kind of disguise so that people would not easily see what was going to happen. However, he included enough detail in terms of either place names, well known symbols, dates, titles, etc. so that when something happened, one could tell that he had predicted it. His prophecies are mostly of political events, such as the one that was to make him famous in England, that the English Senate would behead its king.⁴ Before the death of Charles I, one could not tell what he was referring to. Afterwards it was obvious, as obvious as his prediction recently identified about the Pope.

In Nostradamus's explanations of what he was doing and how he did it, he first asserted that he was a prophet in the Biblical sense, namely that God had revealed future events to him, and enabled him to make them known in a certain fashion.⁵

It is interesting that Nostradamus, and his contemporary, Guillaume Postel, both claimed to be prophets in the Biblical sense, though the prevailing Church view was that prophecy terminated with the death of the Apostles. However, Postel claimed he was taught the secret of the future by an elderly woman who ran a hospital in Venice, whom he referred to as the Virgin of Venice, who revealed to him the secrets of the Cabbala. Postel is the first person to translate the central Cabbalistic work, the Zohar, into Latin. For Postel the message was that people should reform because the culmination of divine history was about to occur. So, he inveighed in ancient prophetic style and tried to get the kings of France, the Church leaders and others to change their moral lives.⁶

Nostradamus claimed to be a prophet in a more mundane and genetic sense—mundane in that he was simply indicating that a lot

⁴ See William Lilly, *Monarchy, or no Monarchy in England* (London, 1651), p. 37; W. Atword, *Wonderful Predictions of Nostradamus*, Grebner, David Pareus and Antonius Torquatus (London, 1689), Preface; and Michel Nostradamus, *The True Prophecies or Prognostications of Michael Nostradamus*, trans. and commented by T. de Garencieres (London, 1672), Preface to the Reader, 2nd page.

⁵ See Nostradamus, "Preface de M. de Nostradamus a ses Propheties, Ad Caesarem Nostradamum filium", in Leoni, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-131. On p. 124, Nostradamus, after explaining that God had revealed future events to him, said modestly that he did not want to assume so sublime a title as "prophet" for himself, for the present.

⁶ On Guillaume Postel, see the recent biography by Marion L. Kuntz, *Guillaume Postel. Prophet of the Restitution of All Things. His Life and Thought* (The Hague, 1981).

of human political and military disasters would occur before the end of the world (which he put soon after 1991, if any reader is concerned)—and genetic in the sense that prophecy was in his biological make-up. He told King Henri II that he was a member of one of the Lost Tribes, the tribe of Issachar, which had been given the gift of prophecy.⁷

Further, he told his son that God had revealed future events to him by means of astronomical revolutions, i.e. astrology. Everything is governed by God, and God can give power to his prophets to foresee and foretell future events. Nostradamus said he wrote out his quatrains for “the common benefit of Mankind”. He had kept quiet about most of his future information because his contemporaries would find it disturbing in that it disagreed with their expectations. So he decided to state what he knew “in dark abstruse Sentences” and to set down the most urgent matters. When the prophecies would be fulfilled, people could tell that he had predicted them, and would realize that God had fore-ordained these events. So, he saw himself as reinforcing people’s awareness of Divine Providence.⁸

After the death of Charles I, various astrologers and politicians seized upon the text of Nostradamus to show that Charles’s beheading was part of a divine plan. Many theologians sought to make a much bigger claim, namely that what was happening in England in the Puritan Revolution was the fulfillment of various monumental prophecies in Scripture, and that the Millennium was about to begin. Both the astrologers and the theologians sought to justify their claims to future knowledge.

Just as we are nowadays being constantly reassured or discouraged by economic forecasters, who are trying to tell us what our economic life will be like in the future, seventeenth-century astrologers were offering their views of the political future. The reliability of their predictions was somewhat enhanced by showing that predecessors like Nostradamus had predicted present events. All sorts of alleged predic-

⁷ See the article, “Nostredame, Michel de”, by A. Franklin, in *Nouvelle Biographie generale* (Paris, 1866), Vol. XXXVII, p. 302. This claim about being from the Lost Tribe of Issachar is clearly stated in *Paralipomenes*, Livre I, chap. 12, verse 32, and alluded to in the letter to Henri II, Leoni, *op.cit.*, p. 326.

⁸ Nostradamus, Preface to Cesar Nostradamus, in Leoni, *op.cit.*, pp. 120-131. Gabriel Naudé bitterly attacked Nostradamus’s explanation of how he was able to predict the future. See Naudé, *A History of Magick by way of Apology for all the Wise Men who have unjustly been reputed Magicians, from Creation to the present Age* (London, 1657), pp. 216-22.

tions were suddenly uncovered.⁹ Special predictors appeared on the scene, like Comenius's personal prophet, Drabnik, or like Spinoza's friend and patron, Serrarius, who combined astrological and Biblical predictions to determine when the Jews would be converted, and when the Second Coming would take place.¹⁰

Because there were cynics and sceptics challenging the merits of astrological predictions, and (God forbid) of astrology itself, some interesting defences of astrology were published in the mid-seventeenth century. There is, in fact, a vast literature pro and con. A position advanced by one William Ramsey said that first of all, the Bible states clearly that "the firmament showeth His handiwork", and second that it is obvious that all sorts of future information can be learned from studying the heavens. One can learn about future tides from the phases of the moon. (This is before Newton's law governing this case.) One can do weather forecasting. In fact, Ramsey pointed out, agriculture pretty much depends upon predicting future events from data about the heavens, and people do grow food.¹¹ His opponent, a William Rowland, answered that there was a confusion in all of this. There are natural laws by which God governs the world, and through astronomical information we can learn about these laws and predict accordingly. Secondly, these laws do not enable us to predict matters which depend upon human actions. In the second sense, we cannot know the future, because God has given men free-will. In the first sense we can know the natural future in so far as it results from the continued action of natural laws.¹²

The astrologers kept arguing the case throughout the eighteenth century that knowledge of the future is possible because God has set up natural causal patterns. They also contended that human

⁹ The predictions that one Paul Grebner presented to Queen Elisabeth were published in 1650 in a work entitled *The Future History of Europe*. There was much controversy over whether these predictions were genuine.

¹⁰ Comenius kept publishing the prophecies of Christopher Kotter, Christina Poniatova and Nicholas Drabnik. The latter accompanied Comenius, predicting great events to come. Petrus Serrarius, 1600-69, wrote many books and pamphlets, using astrological and Biblical evidence for his predictions.

¹¹ William Ramsey [Ramesey], *Lux Veritatis, or Christian Judicial Astrology, Vindicated, and Demonology Confuted: in Answer to Nth. Homes, D. D.* (London, 1651), Preface to the Reader, and pp. 1-13.

¹² W. Rowland, *Judiciall Astrology Judicially Condemned* (London, 1652), esp. pp. 13-24, 114, 154, 202 and 256-257. See also, Nathaniel Homes, *Demonologie and Theologie* (London, 1650). Similar criticisms are raised in J. Gere, *Astrology-Mastix, or a Discovery of the Vanity and Iniquity of Judiciall Astrology, or Divining by the Starres* (London, 1646), and J. S., *The Starr-Prophet Anatomiz'd & Dissected* (London, 1675).

life depends upon some knowledge of the future. Doctors, farmers, plumbers, etc. all are making predictions about what will happen. If they had no basis for this, diseases could not be treated or cured, food could not be grown, mechanical improvements could not be made, etc.¹³ The opponents agreed that there are scientific laws, but not the kind the astrologers claimed to find (the influence of astronomical bodies on people's activities), and that there are common-sense ways in which people predict the future on the basis of experience.

A more important kind of knowledge of the future was that advanced by the interpreters of Scripture. The astrologers might make forecasts for individuals about specific events. The Bible interpreters were finding critical news for everybody about what was going to happen, namely that the Millennium was about to begin.

Most of the Bible interpreters in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries were not claiming to be prophets, or to possess any special revelation or divine information. Rather they were contending that long, long ago God gave a group of people the gift of prophecy. These prophecies are recorded in the Old and New Testaments. Some of these prophecies are predictions made at one date in early Jewish history, and fulfilled at another date, such as predictions of the fall of the First Temple, of the Babylonian exile, or the return from Exile, etc. Other predictions are those made in the Old Testament that are fulfilled in the New Testament, such as the coming of the Messiah. Then there are predictions made in both testaments that have been fulfilled at a later date, such as the dispersion of the Jews.

Some scholars in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, upon analyzing the prophecies in the book of Daniel and the book of Revelation came to the conclusion that the predictions with regard to the fall of four great monarchies, with regard to the overthrow of the Antichrist, with regard to the Recall and Restoration of the Jews, with regard to the commencement of the Millennium, were either just being fulfilled, or would be fulfilled in the near future. Those interpreters who took on the name, Millenarians, contended that the Catholic Church deliberately misread the Scriptural texts and misled people into thinking these prophecies had already been fulfilled in ancient times. The Reformation was, however, itself part of the process of fulfilling these prophecies through breaking the power of the Antichrist. The battles being fought to check Turkish power were the beginning of the fall of the last empire. Theoreticians like John Napier (the inventor of logarithms). Thomas Brightman, J. H. Alsted

¹³ See, for instance, R. Turner, *An Astrological Catechism* (London, s.d., but from the late eighteenth century), pp. 6-7.

and Joseph Mede (of Cambridge, the teacher of Ralph Cudworth and Isaac Barrow), laid out a picture drawn from Scripture of the interpretation of the prophecies of Daniel and Revelation as predictions of forthcoming events, and worked out a calculus for computing the dates of these events in the Millennial scenario. One of their calculations was that it would be one thousand two hundred and sixty years after the fall of the Roman Empire that the Millennium would start. If the empire fell *ca.* 400, the Millennium was just around the corner.¹⁴ They and their disciples, such as Henry More, Robert Boyle, Henry Oldenburg and Isaac Newton, also believed one of Daniel's prophecies, that knowledge would increase at the time of the end, and saw the scientific revolution as a visible sign of its fulfilment.¹⁵ The formation of the Royal Society and the founding of Harvard was part of God's plan for unfolding the future.¹⁶

All of this might have been just of academic interest except for its being linked to the actual politics of what was happening in Holland, France, England, central Europe and New England. The Dutch had rebelled against Spanish domination, and the Protestant Dutch had defeated the Catholic Spaniards, and had set up a bastion for free expression of religious ideas. The Catholic French were trying to destroy the Huguenots in the last fling of power of the Antichrist. Europe was convulsed by the Thirty Years War. Protestant England had moved from expelling Catholics to overthrowing the king, and was starting the process of establishing the Kingdom of God on earth. The Jewish expectation of a political Messianic age was being realized in the Puritan Revolution. And in New England the Gospel was being preached to the Indians, thereby completing the process of promulgating it to the whole world. And when "news" arrived that

¹⁴ See John Napier, *A Plaine Discovery of the whole Revelation of Saint John* (Edinburgh, 1593); Thomas Brightman, *The Revelation of Saint John* (Amsterdam, 1644), *A Most comfortable Exposition of the last part of the prophecies of Daniel* (s.l., 1625), and *Brightman's Predictions and Prophecies* (London, 1647); J. H. Alsted, *The Beloved City, or The Saints Reign on Earth a Thousand Years* (London, 1643); and Joseph Mede, *Clavis Apocalyptica* (Cambridge, 1627), and *The Key of Revelation* (London, 1643.)

¹⁵ More and Isaac Newton both wrote commentaries on the Books of Daniel and Revelation. On these thinkers see Arthur Quinn, *The Confidence of British Philosophers* (Leiden, 1977); and R. H. Popkin, "The Third Force in Seventeenth-Century Thought: Scepticism, Science, and Millenarianism" in this volume, pp. 90-119.

¹⁶ Thomas Sprat, *The History of the Royal Society* (London, 1667); and Cotton Mather, *Magnalia Christi americana; or the Ecclesiastical History of New England from its first Planting in the year 1620 unto the Year of Our Lord 1698* (London, 1702).

the Indians were part of the Lost Tribes, the Millenarian interpreters were beside themselves in expectations. All kinds of serious theologians, scientists and politicians came to the conclusion by 1650 that the conversion of the Jews would begin around 1656, and the final fall of the Antichrist, and the beginning of the Millennium, *circa* 1666.¹⁷

I have found a couple of histories of the future written in this period where the Millenarian scenario is delineated with dates and events from 1650 onward.¹⁸

Without going into any more detail, let us look into the justification offered for this inspiring knowledge of the future. In England especially a careful theory of the nature of prophetic knowledge was developed, seeking to show that the knowledge that intelligent, careful and unprejudiced readers of the Bible could have, in the mid-seventeenth century, was as good as any scientific knowledge. This knowledge would involve knowing that the Bible was a reliable document about the past, present and future.

To appreciate the achievement of these Bible interpreters from about 1650 to 1750 one has to keep in mind first that they are writing as normal readers, not as prophets, or inspired people; and secondly, that they were working out their case partly as an explanation of the course of current politics, and partly as a way of meeting challenges from Catholics, and from too radical Bible interpreters, about what level of certainty one can attain about historical events past, present and future. As the political events changed, one finds the interpreters

¹⁷ On this exciting period, see Christopher Hill, *Puritanism and Revolution* (London, 1658), *the Antichrist in Seventeenth Century England* (London, 1971), *The World Turned Upside Down* (New York, 1972), and "Till the Conversion of the Jews" in R. H. Popkin, ed., *Millenarianism and Messianism in English Literature and Thought* (Leiden, 1988); Hugh Trevor-Roper, *Religion, the Reformation and Social Change* (London, 1967); R. H. Popkin, "Jewish Messianism and Christian Millenarianism", in Perez Zagorin, ed., *Culture and Politics from Puritanism to the Enlightenment* (Los Angeles, 1980), pp. 67-90; Peter Toon, *Puritans, The Millennium and the Future of Israel* (Cambridge and London, 1970), and David S. Katz, *Philosemitism and the Readmission of the Jews to England, 1603-1655* (Oxford, 1982).

¹⁸ Anon. *A Brief Description of the Future History of Europe From Anno 1650 to Anno 1710. Treating principally of those grand and famous Mutations yet expected in the World, as the Ruine of the Popish Hierarchy, the final Annihilation of the Turkish Empire, the Conversion of the Eastern and Western Jews, and the Restauration of the ancient Inheritances in the holy Land, and the Fifth Monarchy of the Universal Reign of the Gospel of Christ upon Earth* (s.l., 1650). Johann Amos Comenius, *A General Table of Europe, representing the present and future States thereof: viz, the present Governments, Languages, Religions, Foundations and Revolutions both of Governments and Religions. The Future Mutations, Revolutions, Governments and Religion of Christendome, and of the World* (London, 1670).

moving from justifying a political revolution overthrowing the monarchy, to justifying the Restoration, the Glorious Revolution, and later to justifying or denouncing the French and American revolutions. For the purposes of this paper, I will, by-and-large, ignore the political applications of the theory of knowledge of the future and concentrate on the theory itself. A basic stage of the theory was worked out by the so-called Latitudinarian theologians of the Anglican Church in the period roughly 1650-1700, especially by Henry Hammond and Edward Stillingfleet. They sought to show there was a reasonable basis for accepting Scripture as accurate history, that there was at least as much evidence for accepting Scripture as any other historical documents. And in accepting Scripture as accurate, this includes accepting as accurate the content which includes the occurrence of miracles, and the predictions of the prophets. (It is this theory that Hume was attacking in the essay "Of Miracles".) Then, on the basis of this theory, later exegetes, Isaac Newton, William Whiston, Bishop Clayton and Bishop Newton, amongst others, worked out a theory of scientific evaluation of prophecies.¹⁹

In answer to Catholics raising sceptical challenges to using Scripture as the rule of truth, and in answer to the Bible criticism of Isaac La Peyrère, Samuel Fisher, Benedict de Spinoza and Richard Simon, about the accuracy of the original text and of the transmitted text, the Latitudinarians contended that considering the importance of the book, it could not have been altered at any time since it first came into being "without a general conspiracy and agreement". Otherwise the fraud or alteration would have been immediately exposed by others who had copies.²⁰

As a matter of historical fact there is not much variation and there is no important variation of texts belonging to various groups like the Samaritans, the Caraites, the Jews, the Greek Catholics, etc. The Latitudinarians insisted that it would be unreasonable to think that

¹⁹ On the Latitudinarian theory of knowledge, see Martin Griffin, *Latitudinarianism in the Seventeenth-Century Church of England*, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Yale, 1962; Henry van Leeuwen, *The Problem of Certainty in English Thought, 1630-1690* (The Hague, 1970); Robert Carroll, *The Common-Sense Philosophy of Religion of Bishop Edward Stillingfleet, 1635-1699* (The Hague, 1975); and Barbara Shapiro, *John Wilkins, 1614-1672. An Intellectual Biography* (Berkeley, 1969).

²⁰ John Tillotson, Sermon LXXIII, in *The Works of the Most Reverend Dr. John Tillotson, late Lord Archbishop of Canterbury*, 3 vols. (London, 1712-14), Vol. II, p. 483. See also Henry Hammond, *Of the Reasonableness of Christian Religion*, (London, 1650), pp. 14-20.

God, who cared enough about mankind to give them revealed truth, would not also provide ways of keeping errors from creeping in.²¹

But are these books what they claim to be? Stillingfleet, Tillotson *et al.* contended that, although no one could prove with mathematical certainty that Moses wrote the Pentateuch, or that St. Matthew wrote the Gospel according to Matthew, we do know by "credible and uncontrolled report" that there is "as much authority, as for any book in the world", so a reasonable person should accept the ascriptions of authorship.²² Next, from what we know of the historical personages who were the alleged authors, there is no reason to suspect them of falsehood or deceit. Look at the lengths they went to to act as if what they wrote was true. Moses led his people through the desert for years and years. The Apostles risked their lives to spread their message. So we can rest assured that Scripture has been transmitted down to us by the general and uncontrolled testimony of all ages, and that the authority of it was never questioned in that age wherein it was written, nor invalidated ever since.²³

Thus, the Latitudinarians maintained that since we could trust the accuracy of the Bible, we could trust its content. The confirmation offered therein that it was revelatory was the report of miracles, special divine acts, that showed God provided convincing evidence. If anyone doubts the reports of the Biblical miracles, we will show that there is as much assurance for these historical reports of the occurrence of miracles as of any other matter of fact. The ancient Jews claimed over half a million people witnessed the revelation at Mount Sinai. The Crucifixion was a very public event, etc. We have as much evidence for these matters as for any other historical fact so far removed from present experience.

So, the historically recorded miracles are to be accepted as fact, in the same way as any other historical facts. The same is true of the historically recorded prophecies. They are reported as being stated at certain moments of history by the various people endowed with prophetic abilities. Some of these prophecies were reported as fulfilled in ancient times in Jewish history. Some prophecies made by ancient

²¹ Tillotson, Sermons CLXVIII and CLXXII, in *Works*, Vol. III, pp. 430-32 and 446-52.

²² Tillotson, Sermon LXXIII, in *Works*, Vol. II, p. 484 (first pagination). Edward Stillingfleet in *Origines Sacrae*, 3rd edition (London, 1666), Book II, sec. 3, said "We have as great certainty that Moses was the author of the records going under his name, as we can have of any matter of fact done at so great a distance of time from us", p. 110.

²³ Tillotson, Sermon LXXIII, in *Works*, Vol. II, p. 484.

Jewish prophets were reported as fulfilled in the life of Jesus, even if the majority of the Jews failed to notice this at the time. Christian arguers in the Middle Ages and up to the present have tried to show that the prophecy stated in Isaiah 53 that the Messiah would suffer was fulfilled by what happened to Jesus.²⁴

From the vantage point of what was known about history in the seventeenth century, one could point out that prophecies, especially in the books of Daniel and Revelation predicted what would happen after Biblical history. Some of this had come to pass. The Temple in Jerusalem had been destroyed, and the Jews had been driven out of their homeland, and dispersed all over the world. The history of the world after Jesus's appearance on earth seemed to follow the course prophecised by Daniel, of the rise and fall of mighty empires. The course of history from the Reformation onward seemed to indicate that the Messianic scenario of Revelation was occurring before our very eyes. And in terms of the clues given in the prophecies, reasonable people should be able to figure out what was going to happen next.²⁵ Two kinds of prophecy occur in the late seventeenth century, one 'scientific', worked out by Sir Isaac Newton and his disciples, the other 'activist', offered by various religious enthusiasts. The latter have given prophecy a bad name. We will first discuss them briefly and then turn to the Newtonians.

The Philadelphians with their prophetess, Jane Lead,²⁶ the various French prophets, plus various others with private revelations kept up a series of fitful expectations for about fifty years, roughly from 1680 to 1730. These people were making new prophecies about what would happen in the relatively near future to actual living personages as the Millennium began. They created quite a stir. The most important of these groups, the French prophets, started as a group of French Huguenot refugees who fled France several years after the revocation

²⁴ The Christian apologetic literature in the seventeenth century is full of claims about the prophecies in the Bible being fulfilled therein, especially in the case of the prophecy in Isaiah of the coming of the Messiah being fulfilled in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. From the time of the medieval disputations up to current conversionist literature, the text of *Isaiah* 53 has been offered as a crucial one that has been fulfilled in the life of Jesus. Various Jewish answers have been offered, arguing that the text does not refer to the Messiah.

²⁵ For the many applications of the prophecies in *Daniel* and *Revelation* in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, see Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of our Fathers* (Washington: Review and Herald Press, 1946-48), Vols. II and III.

²⁶ Cf. Jane Lead, *The Revelation of Revelations: An Essay towards the Unsealing, Opening and Discovering the Seven Seals, the Seven Thunders and the New Jerusalem State*, second edition (London, 1701).

of the Edict of Nantes, which banned the practice of Protestantism. They had visions of future events. Many people, including important English scholars and scientists, got caught up in the group, whose importance is just beginning to be recognized.²⁷ One of the first Englishmen to join the group was one John Lacy (listed in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as a "pseudo-prophet"). In trances he made some rather specific prophecies such as that one deceased Thomas Eames would be resurrected on 25 May 1708, exactly five months after his burial. When the predictions failed to come about, Lacy still defended believing in prophecies. He wrote, "As to Accomplishment of Prophecies, 'tis as unreasonable to expect the fulfilling of every one of those Predictions, before you believe any one of them; and not to believe the Prediction of any thing till you see it past, that's not believing at all".²⁸ So belief should not be affected by predictions not coming true. Lacy argued also that Prophets should not be judged by the accuracy of their predictions. He pointed out Jesus was wrong at least once. In John 2:19-22 he predicted the rebuilding of the Temple in three days, and it has not been rebuilt yet. We have to recognize "a Word really spoken from God, may fail of coming to pass, and has done, according to the obvious Sense it had or could have had among Men", since "we cannot fully comprehend the Ways and Words", God may have all sorts of secret reasons for not fulfilling his own prophecies.²⁹ This of course could lead to a devastating scepticism about prophecies, since we could never be sure whether we heard them correctly, or whether God had changed His mind after having uttered them. The French prophets remained influential for more than two decades after Mr. Lacy's 'defense' and his continued prophecy. However, a more 'scientific' school of propheciers developed out of Isaac Newton's circle.

Newton himself devoted a good deal of time to studying prophecies. In the 1680's, when Edmund Halley tried to get Newton to publish his theory of gravitation, ten years after its discovery, Newton explained that he was too busy working with Henry More on the prophecies in Daniel and Revelation. The fruits of this research appear in Newton's posthumous work, *Observations on the Prophecies*

²⁷ On the French Prophets, see the most interesting study by Hillel Schwartz, *The French Prophets. The History of a Millenarian Group in Eighteenth Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981).

²⁸ John Lacy, *Warnings of the Eternal Spirit by the Mouth of his Servant John, surnam'd Lacy. The Second Part* (London, 1707), p. vii.

²⁹ John Lacy, *Mr. Lacy's Letter to the Reverend Josiah Woodward, concerning his Remarks on Modern Prophets* (London, 1708), p. 10.

in *Daniel and Revelation*, 1733. We are long past the point when one can ignore this side of Newton's interest, write it off as premature senility (since he was working on it all his life) or act as if it were unrelated to his scientific achievement. So much research on the vast collection of Newton manuscripts, the evaluations of his work by Frank Manuel, Richard Westfall, Margaret Jacob, McGuire and Rattansi, Arthur Quinn and a host of others, clearly put Newton in the camp of the religious scientists who launched and dominated the Royal Society until the middle of the eighteenth century.³⁰

Newton's view, briefly stated, was that God created the natural world which operated with occasional corrections, by natural laws. This world exists in Divine History, and that history has been outlined in Scripture, indicating how man came to be, and what his destiny was. The prophecies tell us this. We cannot tell exactly when these prophetic events are to come to pass, but when they occur, we cannot avoid knowing that a prophecy has been fulfilled, and that this shows the providence of God. The fulfillment of prophecies reinforces our acceptance of the world as a divinely run universe moving toward its predicted culmination as indicated in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Newton was delighted when a young scientist-theologian, William Whiston, produced a description in terms of Newtonian physics of how the final conflagration predicted in the Bible would occur. Whiston's *New Theory of the Earth* was so important that Newton quickly had Whiston appointed as his successor as Lucasian professor of Mathematics at Cambridge.³¹

The great scientist Robert Boyle, who was one of the originating spirits of the Royal Society, and who financed a lot of the scientific research of the time, left some of his vast riches for an annual series of lectures on the harmony of religion and science. At Newton's suggestion, Whiston gave the Boyle lectures in 1708 on "The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies". Whiston held that there could be as good a science of Bible interpreting as of nature. One could examine what prophecies have been made, and whether they have

³⁰ See J. E. McGuire and P. M. Rattansi, "Newton and the Pipes of Pan", *Notes and Records of the Royal Society* XXI (1966), pp. 108-41; Frank Manuel, *The Religion of Isaac Newton* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1974); Margaret C. Jacob, *The Newtonians and the English Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1976); Arthur Quinn, *The Confidence of British Philosophers* (Leiden: E. J. Brill); and Richard S. Westfall, *Never at Rest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981).

³¹ Cf. James E. Force, "Secularisation, the language of God, and the Royal Society at the turn of the seventeenth century", *History of European Ideas*, II (1981), p. 225.

been fulfilled, and where one could list the historical data that constituted the fulfillment. This constitutes a verification of the truth of revelation according to the empirical data. Next one could list the prophecies that are as yet unfulfilled. Since so many prophecies have been fulfilled we have good reasons to expect "the completion of those other prophecies whose periods are not yet come, even if we cannot tell exactly when".³²

A specialist on prophecy after Whiston, Robert Clayton, Bishop of Clogher, writing at the time of Hume, divided the scientific study of prophecy into three types, ones already fulfilled, ones presently and visibly being fulfilled, and those still expected. He defined prophecy as "foretelling future Events which do not depend on a visible chain of necessary Causes". This means that anyone who can foretell in this sense must have special information from God differing from what is known through the ordinary course of nature.³³

Prophecies already fulfilled convince people that these predictions came from God. Prophecies being fulfilled in one's lifetime convince one that God is still active in history. Prophecies not yet fulfilled keep up people's hopes and expectations of future activities of God. The first class of prophecies appear in the Bible and have been catalogued by Whiston. Of the second class, there is a prime example which everyone should be able to perceive, namely what has happened and is happening to the Jews since they rejected Jesus. It was predicted in the Bible that their Temple would be destroyed, that they would be cast out of the Holy Land and dispersed throughout the world, that they would live as a separate people without a land until the end of time, until the Millennium. Bishop Clayton said, "And there is at this Day a strong and very extraordinary Proof, which offers itself daily before our Eyes, of the continued fulfilling of the Prophecies, which we cannot avoid seeing, if we but look into the manner of livelihood which the *Jews*, who are at present dispersed over the Face of the whole Earth". The prophecies about the Jews are "continuing daily to be fulfilled". This, the Bishop said, is increasing proof of Revelation which makes up for the decay in evidence with time of historical

³² William Whiston, *The Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies, Being Eight Sermons Preach'd at the Cathedral of St. Paul in the year 1707* (Cambridge, 1708), p. 6.

³³ Robert Clayton, *A Dissertation on Prophecy* (London, 1749). The definition of prophecy is given on p. 29. In Chandler, *A Vindication of the Antiquity and Authority of Daniel's Prophecies* (London, 1728), p. 214, he said that prophecy "implies the foretelling of a future event, which doth not depend on any rational conjectures, or any necessary train of causes and effects".

miracles.³⁴ The non-conformist minister, Nathaniel Lardner, made the same point in his *The Circumstances of the Jewish People. An Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion*. "The dispersion of the Jews, the longer it lasts, still more and more does it strengthen the evidences of the Christian religion."³⁵ The prophecies about what is going to happen to the Jews in the future, their conversion to Christianity, and their restoration to their homeland, Bishop Clayton said, enlivens our hope "here is bright enough given to the weakest Eyes to discern".³⁶

The high point in scientific study of prophecy is probably the Boyle lectures of Bishop Thomas Newton of Bristol, given in 1756-58, and published many times with the title: *Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the world*. The fourteenth and apparently last edition was published in 1826.³⁷

Bishop Newton put himself squarely in the empirical tradition by pointing out that Sir Francis Bacon was planning to write a scientific history of prophecy. So Bishop Newton in so doing would be showing that belief in prophecy entails belief in revelation.³⁸ First he showed prophecy is perfectly possible. If God is omniscient, he "hath perfect and most exact knowledge of futurity, and foresees all things to come as well as comprehends every thing past and present". And if God is omnipotent, He may give what He knows to others in whatever degrees and proportions He pleases. Thus, in terms of God's knowledge and power, prophecy is possible. Scripture tells us that it has occurred.³⁹ If some sceptic suggests the Biblical account of prophecies are only histories written after the events had happened,

³⁴ Clayton, *op.cit.*, pp. 111-12. Samuel Clarke, in *The Evidences of Natural and Revealed Religion*, in *The Works of Samuel Clarke* (London, 1738), said, "Some of these things are of permanent and visible Effects, even unto this Day. Particularly the captivity and dispersion of the Jews, through Nations, for more than 1600 Years; and yet their continuing a distinct People, in order to the fulfilling other Prophecies of Things still future: This (I say) is particularly a permanent Proof of the Truth of the Ancient Prophecies", p. 702. Whiston was similarly impressed. See his *Accomplishment of Scripture Prophecies*, p. 189.

³⁵ Nathaniel Lardner, *The Circumstances of the Jewish People. An Argument for the Truth of the Christian Religion* (London, 1743), p. 63.

³⁶ Clayton, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

³⁷ Many of these editions are listed in the *British Museum General Catalogue*.

³⁸ Thomas Newton, *Dissertations on the Prophecies, which have remarkably been fulfilled, and at this time are fulfilling in the World*, 3rd edition (London, 1766), Vol. I., pp. 2-3.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 3.

but written in prophetic style, Bishop Newton offers the view of the latitudinarian theologians, that there is as good evidence for ancient prophecies as for any ancient matter of fact. If you deny the accounts of prophecies "you might as well deny the credibility of ancient history".⁴⁰ However, to make his case, Bishop Newton said he would examine the prophecies receiving their completion this very day, so that what were matters of faith to the ancients are matters of fact and certainty to us. The present-day doubter must either renounce his senses and "deny what you read in your bibles, together with what you may see and observe in the world, or else must acknowledge the truth of prophecy, and in consequence of that truth of divine revelation".⁴¹ This will show "there is nothing inconsistent with science and religion, but a great philosopher may be a good Christian. True philosophy is indeed the handmaid to true religion: and the knowledge of the works of nature will lead one to the knowledge of the God of nature".⁴²

In examining prophecies relating to present and forthcoming events, principally concerning the Jews, and the last Empire (from Daniel) which Bishop Newton assumed is obviously the Ottoman Empire, he concluded after three years of lectures on the matter, that scriptural prophecies are not private interpretations of the so-called prophets, or suggestions of their fancy. The prophecies that "either in whole or part are now fulfilling in the world" prove our religion "by ocular demonstration". We are not walking by faith alone, but also by sight.⁴³

For you can have no reason to doubt of the truth of prophecy, and consequently of the truth of revelation, when you see instances of things, which could no ways depend upon human conjecture, foretold with the greatest clearness, and fulfilled hundreds of years afterwards, with the greatest exactness. May you see prophecies, the latest whereof were delivered about one thousand seven hundred years ago, and some of them above three thousand years ago, fulfilling at this very time, in cities, countries and kingdoms in the very same condition, and brought about in the very same manner, and with the very same circumstances as the prophets had foretold.⁴⁴

So, Bishop Newton thought that the empirical facts about Jewish life ("The Jews wonderfully preserved as a distinct people, while their great conquerors are every where destroyed.")⁴⁵ and about the dis-

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, p. 4.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, pp. 5-8. The quotation is on pp. 7-8.

⁴² *Ibid.*, Vol. II, p. 19.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 415.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 416.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, p. 417.

integration of the Ottoman Empire were empirical verifications of prophecies made in ancient times.⁴⁶ The fact that these prophecies were being fulfilled before our very eyes showed that foreknowledge was not only possible, but also actual.

Before looking at Hume's critique or decimation of these accounts of how the future can be known, I would like to say a few words about the last great eighteenth-century theoretician of Biblical prophecy, David Levi, because his disagreements with Bishop Newton and other Christian theorists is one of the reasons scientific analysis of Biblical prophecies is not quite the same intellectual venture it was two centuries or more ago.

David Levi (1740-99) was a self-taught Jewish scholar in England, and took it upon himself to answer the claims about Judaism being set forth by various theologians. He answered Joseph Priestley, Tom Paine and many others. His major work, *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament*, 1793-1800, was considered authoritative by many scholars during the first half of the nineteenth century,⁴⁷

Levi claimed that a careful study of the prophecies about the coming of the Messiah, and about the future history of the Jews shows that Judaism is true, and that Christianity and deism and atheism are all false. (He specifically attacked Hume in his work.) So many prophecies have been exactly fulfilled. This "is an earnest of the completion of the future events so predicted".⁴⁸ Levi appealed to the prophecies about the dispersion of the Jews, and their continuation as a separate people, while their conquerors have all been destroyed,

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, pp. 405-07.

⁴⁷ On David Levi, see his article in the *Encyclopedia Judaica*; and James Picciotto, *Sketches of Anglo-Jewish History*, revised and edited by I. Finstein (London, 1956), pp. 219ff. Levi's *Dissertations on the Prophecies of the Old Testament. In Two Parts. Part I Contains all such Prophecies, as are Applicable to the Coming of the Messiah, The Restoration of the Jews, and the Resurrection of the Dead: Whether applied by Jews or Christians. Part II Contains all such Prophecies as are applied to the Messiah by Christians only, but which are shown not to be Applicable to the Messiah*, was published by himself. Vol. I (London, 1793), Vol. II (London, 1796) and Vol. III (London, 1800). This work, as well as Levi's book on Jewish customs, were considered authoritative by such scholars of Judaism as Hannah Adams and the abbé Henri Grégoire.

⁴⁸ Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, Vol. I, Preface, p. xii. In the preface, and in his answer to Tom Paine, *A Defense of the Old Testament in a series of Letters Addressed to Thomas Paine* (New York, 1797), Levi was concerned to answer the Deists, especially Bolingbroke, Hume, Voltaire, Paine and Spinoza, whom he saw as affecting even Jews with their scepticism. He was, of course, equally anxious to answer orthodox Christians, who thought that scriptural prophecies proved that Christianity was the fulfillment of Judaism.

as an indication that Moses must have been given divine inspiration since he knew that "which* no human foresight could have foreseen". Levi defied the Deists to explain how Moses or anybody else could have foreseen Jewish survival by any human means. Only divine pre-science could account for this.⁴⁹

Turning from the case of prophecy which everyone can see being fulfilled before their very eyes, Levi examined the central prophecies about what is supposed to happen what the Messiah comes. There should be universal peace. But "it is clear from all history that Christianity cannot be the Peaceable kingdom of the Messiah, as foretold by the Prophet. But, need we the authority of History in proof of this. Have we not the evidence of our own senses? Can any honest impartial person lay his hand on his heart, and declare that the known world at present enjoys such universal peace? Surely Not!"⁵⁰ (This was written in 1792.) Levi claimed the Christians invented the Second Coming expectation because the original prophecies about the Messiah were not fulfilled with the coming of Jesus.⁵¹

So, with lots and lots of detail, Levi argued against the Deists and infidels (of whom Hume, Bolingbroke and Voltaire are always named) that the prophecies about Jewish survival have been and are being fulfilled, and that they could only have been foretold from divine revelation. No natural account can be given of how anyone three thousand years ago could have predicted the state of affairs that we now see before our very eyes. On the other hand, the disturbed state of the world, the succession of wars, is disproof of the Christian claim that the prophecy about the coming of the Messiah has been fulfilled. The Christians, to avoid being empirically disproved, have had to engage in what the late Imre Lakatos called concept-stretching, having two comings of the Messiah.⁵²

⁴⁹ Levi, *Dissertations on the Prophecies*, Vol. I, Preface, pp. xv-xix. At the end of the section, Levi said that Jewish survival is "a standing miracle even to this very day, the like of which hath never been seen or heard in the world". He stressed the same point in his *Defense of the Old Testament*, in his first letter to Tom Paine.

⁵⁰ Levi, *Dissertations*, Vol. I, Diss. III (on the Prophecies of Isaiah), pp. 89-118. The quotation is on p. 118.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, Vol. I, Diss. III, pp. 130-31. Levi appealed to Jacques Basnage's *The History of the Jews from Jesus Christ to the Present Time*, translated by Thomas Taylor (London, 1708), chap. xxxiv, sec. xiv, p. 751, to support the view that the Second Coming was only hatched to get Jews to embrace Christianity. (Basnage, quoting the Protestant theologian, Pierre Allix, suggested that it was better strategy for Christians to stress the Second Coming when talking to Jews, than to dwell on the first appearance of Christ.)

⁵² See Imre Lakatos, *Proofs and Refutations. The of Mathematical Discovery*, ed. J. Worrall and E. Zahar (Cambridge and New York, 1976). Levi, *Dissertations*,

Levi then contended that since the prophecies about Jewish survival had been fulfilled, so we ought also to expect that the prophecies about Jewish restoration and redemption should also be fulfilled. He showed signs that this might be the case, such as Napoleon's invasion of Egypt, but refused to make any precise predictions.⁵³ After commenting on the failure of all previous precise predictions by Jews and Christians. Levi commented:

However, when we see so many nations engaged in a war, carried on with almost unparalleled violence, desolating so many countries, and producing such extraordinary Revolutions, as have scarcely even been witnessed; but which seem so much to accord with the events, that different prophets have predicted are to take place at, or near the time of that great and important event. I can not but consider all of those occurrences, as indications of the near approach of the redemption of the nation [that is the Jews]. It therefore, in my humble opinion, behoooves every rational mind, to pay a due regard to those awful warnings, and to endeavour to depreciate the wrath of the Almighty, by a thorough reformation, and an amendment to their lives.⁵⁴

Levi was hardly alone in seeing the events at the end of the eighteenth century as fulfillments of prophecies. It was one of the most intense times of relating current events with Biblical predictions. One of the reasons why such interpretations are taken less seriously nowadays, though they certainly are still being made, is the attack on the possibility of future knowledge offered by David Hume.⁵⁵

Hume, unlike many of his contemporaries, hardly went into any detail about what kinds of future knowledge people claimed was possible. He never treated either the astrologers's claims or the Bible interpreters's ones, and indicated little or no knowledge of the various works on prophecy which were being read by most intellectuals at the time. The possibility of prophetic knowledge is just dismissed by Hume at the end of the essay "Of Miracles":

What we have said of miracles may be applied without any variation, to prophecies, and indeed, all prophecies are real miracles, and as such

Vol. I, Diss. III, p. 138, said "a number of Christian writers being fully convinced, formed the ridiculous scheme of the Millennium, in order to sooth the Jews, and win them to Christianity, by holding out the glorious condition of the second advent of Jesus which has no basis in the Old Testament".

⁵³ Levi, *Dissertations*, Vol. III, Diss. VII, pp. 137-38,

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, Vol. III, Diss. VII, p. 140.

⁵⁵ Many works interpreting the French Revolution, the American Revolution and the Napoleonic period in prophetic terms, as, for example, an anonymous, *Prophetic Conjectures on the French Revolution, and other recent and shortly expected events* (London, 1793), which ends, "It is certain that the authors of the French revolution had nothing less in view than the accomplishment of prophecy." p. 63. For a wide range of such prophetic writings, see Froom, *op.cit.* Vol. III.

only can be admitted as proofs of any revelation. If it did not exceed the capacity of human nature to foretell events, it would be absurd to employ any prophecy as an argument for a divine mission or authority from heaven.⁵⁶

Bishop Newton had carefully distinguished a miracle from a prophecy,⁵⁷ but I think would have agreed with Hume in the sense that the cause of prophetic knowledge would have to be miraculous, would require divine action.

Hume did not consider whether people have foretold events. Instead in several ways he argued that it exceeds the capacity of human nature to foretell events. Why? In the essay "Of a Particular Providence and of a Future State", Hume contended that:

All the philosophy, therefore, in the world, and all the religion, which is nothing but a species of philosophy, will never be able to carry us beyond the usual course of experience, or give us measures of the conduct and behaviour different from those which are furnished by reflections on common life. No new fact can ever be inferred from the religious hypothesis, no event foreseen or foretold; no reward or punishment expected or dreaded, beyond what is already known by practice and observation.⁵⁸

Well, why can no event be foreseen or foretold? The astrologers have claimed they can do it because there are links between certain kinds of present events and future ones. The prophets claim they have been given information by God about the future. The Bible commentators like Bishop Newton say that since God is omniscient, He knows the future, and since He is omnipotent, He can pass on some of his future information to men. Hume insisted, from the human perspective, anything that is conceivable is possible. Any state of affairs is conceivable, in the sense of one's being able to imagine it. Therefore any state of affairs is possible. This quickly shows that we cannot show any necessary connections between events, since we can conceive any possible state of affairs following or preceding any event. This becomes Hume's evidence for why we cannot know the future by inference from present facts, since nothing necessarily follows from present facts.⁵⁹

This much of Hume's analysis would rule out what the astrologers or dogmatic scientists were claiming, namely that they could discover natural laws and infer from these what would follow. As Hume showed

⁵⁶ David Hume, *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*, Selby-Bigge edition (Oxford, 1975), sec. X, pp. 130-31.

⁵⁷ Thomas Newton, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 7.

⁵⁸ Hume, *Enquiry*, sec. XI, p. 146.

⁵⁹ Hume developed this case most forcefully in *A Treatise of Human Nature*, Selby-Bigge edition (Oxford, 1978), Book I, Part III, sec. vi, pp. 86-87.

such inference always depended on an assumption about the future which we could not know is true, namely that future events will be like past events, or that nature will continue to be uniform.⁶⁰

The prophet and the Bible commentator are not basing prophecy on inferences. They are claiming God knows past, present and future, and can cause Prophet X to have some of this knowledge. Hume does not rule out the possibility of God's foreknowledge. He admits many times that there may be secret or inner causes of events, that humans will never know. If God is significantly different than a human being, He may know actual causes. However, and this becomes crucial in Hume's analysis, we cannot know God as a cause of events any more than we can know one natural state of affairs to be the cause of another. Hume contended we do not perceive Divine Power, and we do not find any link between the idea of God and anything else.⁶¹ Hence we cannot infer any new fact from the religious hypothesis, because we have no way of determining what God, in fact, causes. *A fortiori* we cannot tell if He caused the supposed future information that Moses, Isaiah, Daniel or Jesus thought that they possessed. In the normal course of events, nobody *knows* the future. So, if they did, it would be abnormal, it would be miraculous. Since our beliefs are conditioned by the course of our experience, no reasonable person could believe a miracle has occurred. Q. E. D.

The rapidity with which Hume eradicates the credibility of the supernatural in the essay "Of Miracles" is breathtaking. But it did not convince his contemporaries, partly I believe because they operated in an intellectual world in which it was taken as fact that Biblical history was the basis of world history, and that Providential events had taken place in ancient times, and were continuing to take place.⁶² As we have seen, Sir Isaac Newton, William Whiston, Bishop Clayton, Bishop Newton, David Levi (and I could name dozens and dozens of respectable additional authors) saw the fulfillment of prophecies taking place in empirical time and place, in their own time. They took as the most obvious, the survival of the Jews and the condition of the Jews. They contended (and Levi spelled this out) that no one could give a natural explanation of two features of our information about the Jews, one that it conforms to what was predicted, foretold or prophesied by Moses, Daniel and Jesus, ranging from three thousand

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, Book I, Part III, sec. vi, pp. 86-90.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, Book I, Part III, sec. xiv, pp. 159-60.

⁶² See my articles on "The Early Critics of Hume", and "Joseph Priestley's Criticisms of David Hume's Philosophy", in Richard H. Popkin, *The High Road to Pyrrhonism* (San Diego, 1980).

years ago to one thousand seven hundred years ago, and two, that what has happened to the Jews is unlike what has happened to any other human group. Hume did not attack any particular opponent or go into any detail, so we do not know whether he would have challenged the alleged facts about the predictions of Jewish history or the character of Jewish history, or whether he would have claimed the facts of Jewish history could be explained naturalistically. I presume if he had bothered to go into detail, he would have shown that lots of other matters were predicted in the Bible that have not come to pass, so a couple of good guesses is not so impressive when opposed to all of the unfulfilled prophecies. However, if Hume had argued the details, he would have had to fight his way through all the details of Bible exegesis.⁶³ Voltaire, Tom Paine and others did this, and helped bring about the state of affairs in which many intellectuals no longer took the Biblical framework as the basic pattern of human history. When that occurred, then Hume's arguments appeared decisive.

The Newtonians would have probably agreed with Hume that the future could not be foretold scientifically or pseudo-scientifically, but from Isaac Newton to Bishop Newton they would have claimed that it could be foretold by Biblical prophecies, properly understood. Only when confidence in the Bible as history was eroded, did Hume's case become impressive. Maybe it took Kant to make Hume plausible.

And now, we can safely sort out prediction (in the best sense) as what scientists do, by induction from experience. Foretelling, prophecy and divining have been downgraded to what religious cranks, Jeanne Dixon, etc. do, which readers of the *National Enquirer* may take seriously. Predicting is a tentative enterprise, the common sense expectation codified, while foretelling, prophecy and divining are now part of the irrational forces we try to keep at bay.⁶⁴ The intellectual journey by which these once identical activities got separated, from Nostradamus to Hume, helps us see in focus the steps by which we have gotten where we are. Philo, in Hume's *Dialogues*, warned us of the danger of speculating about the two eternities, "before and after the present state of things".⁶⁵ In view of the catastrophies that

⁶³ In my article, "David Hume, Philosophical versus Prophetic Historian", *Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* VII (1976), pp. 83-95. I showed that Hume just dropped the whole Scriptural prophetic framework that many of his learned contemporaries accepted. He ignored the prophetic history that men like David Hartley and Joseph Priestley were propounding at the time.

⁶⁴ See Richard Lewinson, *Prophets and Prediction. The History of Prophecy from Babylon to Wall Street* (London, 1958).

⁶⁵ Hume, *Dialogues Concerning Natural Religion* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1980), Part I, p. 7.

have preceeded our present one, and those that seem to be impending, this becomes difficult if not impossible. And, now without any acceptable framework for foretelling the future, we are left adrift with the meaningless, valueless world Hume described in his last two dialogues.

XIX

AN ASPECT OF THE PROBLEM OF RELIGIOUS FREEDOM IN THE FRENCH AND AMERICAN REVOLUTIONS

In the year 1790 two men were consecrated bishops, one in the newly formed United States of America, John Carroll of Baltimore, and the other in the new French constitutional monarchy, the Abbé Henri Grégoire. Each faced the challenge of relating the Church to a revolutionary and secular state.

Carroll had to work out his solution first and under rather unique conditions. He was a Jesuit priest, trained in European institutions, who returned to America in 1774 after the Jesuits had been suppressed. He arrived to find that his brother, cousin and other leading Catholics had thrown in their lot with the Revolutionaries. The Catholics in English-speaking America, who were a tiny minority of about one per cent of the population, largely opted for the Revolutionary cause, primarily, I think, because they knew or suspected that England would extend to America its ban on Catholic worship. Daniel Carroll, the Bishop's brother, played important roles in revolutionary affairs; his cousin, Charles, was the one Catholic signer of the Declaration of Independence; both were involved in working out what later became the First Amendment to the Constitution.¹

It was John Carroll's task to organize and run the widely dispersed Catholic congregations. Especially in view of the fact that the Jesuits were suppressed, his genius in creating a viable, organized diocese out of the thirteen colonies and adjacent territories is a wonderful saga, but it is not our present concern. Rather, let us look at the way in which he reconciled Catholic support for a secular state and justified religious tolerance for all groups, while steadfastly maintaining that Catholicism is the only true religion and that its members should actively work toward bringing everyone into the bosom of the Church.

¹ See John Gilmary Shea, *The Life and Times of the Most Rev. John Carroll* (New York: J. G. Shea, 1988), chaps. 1-4; Peter Guilday, *The Life and Times of John Carroll* (New York: Encyclopedia Press, 1922), chaps. 1-7; and Annabelle M. Melville, *John Carroll of Baltimore* (New York: Scribners, 1955), chaps. 1-6. See also the articles on the members of the Carroll family in *The New Catholic Encyclopedia*, vol. III (1967), pp. 151-154.

I should like to compare Carroll's views, expressed in a few papers, to those of Henri Grégoire.

Throughout it should be kept in mind that the Catholics were a tiny minority, legally recognized in only three colonies at the outset of the Revolution. Even after the Revolution, it was not clear that the new republic would tolerate Catholicism or Judaism until the First Amendment was ratified in the spring of 1789.² Hence, Carroll had to fend off charges that Catholicism was subversive to the new state and show that religious freedom for Catholics would be a general benefit for the country as a whole, not simply a pleasant boon for its 30,000 Catholics. Early America had a fair share of anti-Catholic writers arguing that the Pope or the Church was the Anti-Christ.³ Possibly because of the small number of Catholics, these polemics in America do not seem to have carried as much weight as similar attacks in England. Undoubtedly, Carroll's expositions helped in the intellectual sphere, while his brother's efforts did much to incorporate a clause in the Constitution stating that there shall be no religious qualifications for public office, and another in the First Amendment to the effect that Congress shall pass no law establishing any religion. The first was in conflict with laws in several states forbidding Catholics and non-Christians from holding office; both Jews and Catholics had to fight these through the courts for the next forty or fifty years.⁴ It would appear that America, in contrast to other countries, was able to give Jews and Catholics political rights without a struggle because the Constitutional provision and the First Amendment applied only to what the Federal government could not do. This left the states with their exclusionary regulations and bigotry continuing for several decades.

While Bishop Carroll was trying to nurture and protect the small widely dispersed flock, and make it a meaningful religious community with schools, teachers, etc., Grégoire faced a totally different

² See William George Torpey, *Judicial Doctrines of Religious Rights in America* (Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1948), pp. 3-26. The Jewish case was actually different for some of the American Protestant leaders such as President Ezra Stiles of Yale. These Millenarians viewed the few actual Jews and the possible Jewish Indians (The Lost Tribes) as potential creators of the Millennium. Hence, they felt no need or desire to exclude them from society.

³ Some of this literature is dealt with in Thomas More Brown, "The Image of the Beast: Anti-Papal Rhetoric in Colonial America", in Richard O. Curry and Thomas M. Brown, *Conspiracy, The Fear of Subversion in American History* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1972), pp. 1-20.

⁴ Torpey, *Judicial Doctrines*, p. 16, gives the religious qualifications for office-holding in each of the thirteen states.

situation. In 1789 France was about 99% Catholic. Grégoire was an enlightened priest from a small district in Alsace who first gained prominence in 1787 by his prize-winning essay in the contest of the Academy of Sciences in Metz on "How to Make the Jews Happy and Useful in France". His proposal, published just prior to the Revolution, was to outlaw anti-semitism, give the Jews an Enlightenment education and make them French citizens.⁵ On that platform, Grégoire became a delegate in the First Estate at the meeting of the Estates-General. He abhorred the pomp and ceremony of the meetings which dealt not with the real issues, but with such ceremonial matters as seating arrangements and choices of delegates to meet the king. Finally, Grégoire with some others left the First Estate to join the Third Estate. This is usually taken as the beginning of the Revolution.⁶

A National Assembly began to function; the storming of the Bastille, in which Grégoire played an heroic role, followed. In the Assembly, Grégoire pushed for a series of causes: citizenship for Jews, Protestants and blacks; the abolishment of slavery; the restructuring of the Church under state control.⁷ Some of Grégoire's causes, for example, his egalitarianism (except for blacks) had already been achieved in the United States. His move to establish a Constitutional Church, however, was far different from anything proposed in our country. Grégoire's church was to be financially underwritten by the state, which together with the church members, would have a role in choosing bishops. This church would, from the state's point of view, be but one of many to be managed in this manner, and the law of 1791 giving citizenship to the Jews put their religious structure under state control.

The fact that Grégoire was both a Gallican and a secret Jansenist is important. Due to this background, he opposed the infallibility of the Pope and his authority over French Church affairs, arguing that if Popes were infallible then Councils would be useless. If the Pope could simply announce what was true doctrine, this should be clearly

⁵ Henri Grégoire, *Essai sur la Régénération physique, morale et politique des Juifs* (Metz, 1789).

⁶ Grégoire's diary of the meeting of the First Estate and his move to the Third Estate is being edited and published by his biographer, Ruth Necheles. A brief account appears in Carnot's "Notice historique sur Henri Grégoire", in Henri Grégoire, *Histoire des sectes religieuses* (Paris, 1845), Tome VI, pp. ii-iv.

⁷ On Grégoire's career, see Ruth Necheles, *The Abbé Grégoire, 1789-1831* (Westport Conn.: Negro Univ. Press, 1971). On the Constitutional Church, see A. Aulard, *Christianity and the French Revolution* (London: Little Brown, 1927), chap. 2.

revealed, for any uncertainty would make the Pope's declarations useless. Thus, doubts such as his own, show that Papal infallibility does not exist.⁸ For reasons like these, Grégoire rejected the Pope's authority and supported a state-run Church. In 1790, the bill setting up the Constitutional Church was passed and Grégoire was the first Bishop chosen under its provisions. He became Bishop of Blois, being consecrated by Talleyrand, who was formerly a regular Bishop and chose to be a Constitutional Bishop. Every priest in France, regardless of rank, had to choose either to accept Constitutional status under state control, or to remain with the Pope, who refused to recognize the Constitutional Church. The so-called "non-juring" priests lost all possible livelihood, for the churches became state property, and could not be used by non-recognized organizations.

A further development which accelerated the rupture between the Constitutional Church and regular Catholicism was the issue of the monarchy. In France, the tie of the Church to His Most Catholic Highness had been extremely strong. In 1791 Grégoire, always a leader in the Assembly, proclaimed "that kings are in the moral order what monsters are in the physical ones".⁹ Grégoire carried the day and France became a Republic. While he was completely in favor of deposing Louis XVI, he strongly opposed the death penalty, and, hence, regicide. As the theoretician of the Constitutional Church, Grégoire had to prove that it could flourish and enlighten the new Republic. Plongeron shows that Grégoire did develop a theory of Christian republicanism to counter the long union of Church and monarch.¹⁰

From 1792 onward, as the Reign of Terror developed, all religion was subjected to tremendous pressure. Regular Catholic clerics fled, many because they were royalists and supporters of the Pope. Although Grégoire played a major role in the government from 1792 to 1794, often as President of the Assembly or Commissioner of various departments, he seems to have had no effect in halting the drive to destroy all established religions and replace them by the Religion of Reason. In an episode in 1793, which we will discuss later, Gobel,

⁸ Cousin d'Avalon, *Grégoriana, ou Résumé général de la conduite, des actions et conduite, des actions et des écrits de M. le Comte Henri Grégoire* (Paris, 1821), p. 110.

⁹ "Grégoire, H", in *Biographie Moderne, Lives of Remarkable Characters who have Distinguished Themselves from the Commencement of the French Revolution* (London, 1811), II, p. 114.

¹⁰ Bernard Plongeron, *Théologie et Politique au siècle des lumières (1770-1820)* (Geneva: Droz, 1973), pp. 149-154.

the Archbishop of Paris, was forced in the Assembly to renounce his religion and declare himself an atheist. When Grégoire was ordered to do the same, he refused in a fiery speech. He continued to wear his clerical garb to the Assembly and was accused of trying to introduce Catholicism into France. After Robespierre's fall, Grégoire, in his "Discours sur les cultes", proposed a new law that gave all sects their freedom and totally separated them from state control. This law of 1795, which passed quickly, had the effect of re-legalizing Papal Catholicism. Grégoire's embattled career, fighting for justice for the downtrodden and against the anti-Republican forces of Napoleon, Louis XVIII, Louis-Philippe, and the power of the Vatican, continued until his death in 1831—and even beyond as the Pope tried to prevent his having a Catholic burial.

Let us now consider Grégoire's attempt to work out a justification of religious freedom, and a theory of the relation between the Church and the secular state, and a solution to conflicts when the dictates of religion and the secular state collide. We will compare Grégoire with Carroll, with whom he corresponded, and conclude that Grégoire's position is an outcome of his monumental millenarian interpretation of the French Revolution and its aftermath, whereas Carroll, unlike many of his Protestant confreres, showed only a slight indication of a millenarian expectation.¹¹

In the United States the problem of religious liberty for Catholics was resolved rather easily. There seems to have been no tension in Catholic leaders becoming republicans since their option for the Revolution put them in the republican camp. No real theory seems to have been needed to justify republicanism, which is no surprise, considering the official anti-Catholicism of England. There really was no alternative but to oppose the side which rejected Catholicism; a secular republic was obviously better for Catholic development than a Protestant monarchy. Given the miniscule number of Catholics, they stood more chance of surviving in a secular state where they were both tolerated and given opportunity for expression.

In France the problem was reversed. Both the population and the King were Catholic. The Revolution began with restrictions on the

¹¹ America had many Millenarians who saw the emergence of an independent government as a sign of the unfolding of the Providential Plan. One American clergyman, David Austin, announced that the "kingdom of the mountain, began on the Fourth of July, 1776, when the *birth* of the Man-Child—the hero of civil and religious liberty—took place in these United States". The Man-Child is then going to slay the beast and overthrow Babylon. See *The Millennium or the Thousand Years of Prosperity, Promised to the Church of God* (Elizabethtown, 1794). Austin was also preparing to ship Jews to Palestine for the Millennium.

monarchy, but many of the revolutionary leaders saw the Church as at least as dangerous a menace as the King. Raised on Enlightenment attacks on religion, especially on Catholicism, they envisaged a new society which would control and reduce the Church's power. The first step was to make the Church a servant of the state. Grégoire's reasons for pressing for this "drastic" reform were, as with all of his other policies, part of a millenarian program. To him, the Church was corrupt and had lost its spiritual force—an argument which would obviously have made no sense in America at that time. The Church would be revitalized through state control and religious pluralism; the Church member would renew his contact with the real meaning of Christianity. (Some have said that Grégoire was trying to Protestantize the Church through state control, to return it to a form of primitive Christianity.) At the same time, Grégoire tried, contrary to his American confreres, to Christianize the Revolutionary state. When the Declaration of the Rights of Man was presented, he proposed a Declaration of the Duties of Man, with God declared the source of the rights and the duties.¹² It was an indication that in the final analysis he put religion above the state.

Even before the overthrow of the king, Grégoire argued that one should render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's—it being understood that the ruler cannot be an atheist, nor the law impious. Grégoire's basic political view, which simply became republican in time, was that God is the only master of France or any place else. The king himself, as the first delegate of the nation, has to submit to the laws of the sovereign, for the king belongs to the people while the people belong only to themselves. As soon as the law is promulgated, everyone should respectfully accept it. Real liberty lies in this obedience to the law which, according to Montesquieu, involves doing all that one ought to do. It means always respecting the rights of others and by this we begin to be just.¹³

Since God imposes this political system and the system is a direct connection of God and the people, republicanism is the most just system. "Who does not love the Republic is a bad citizen and consequently a bad Christian".¹⁴ Grégoire made his religion the basis for his republicanism. Apparently, he tried to preserve the religious-

¹² C. d'Avalon, *op. cit.*, p. 9; and Albert Mathiez, *The French Revolution* (New York: Russell, 1962), p. 59.

¹³ Plonger, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 154 from a pastoral letter of 1792. (This, of course, was said after Louis XVI had fallen.) Grégoire is quoted in Carnot, *op. cit.*, Tome VI, p. ii, as saying "With the grace of God I will die a good Catholic and a good Republican."

moral values of the Republic during the Reign of Terror, except when the Republic, through its atheistic leaders, tried to destroy religion.

Thus, in America Catholics adopted a republican attitude and a ready acceptance of the separation of Church and State, while in France the leading Revolutionary Catholic pressed for a state-run Church and freedom for other religious groups. Grégoire, as a theoretician of France's development into a Republic, insisted that he was both a republican and a Catholic, and that being a good Catholic meant being a good republican and vice versa.

However, while Grégoire held this view, his revolutionary colleagues were moving to a complete secularism. They saw the old Catholic Church, loyal to the Pope, as a counter-revolutionary enemy in a league with the royalists, whereas the Constitutional Church represented an officially supported bastion of superstitious fanaticism and irrationality. A group of atheists, Chaumette, Hébert and Cloots, who were especially powerful in the Paris government, pressed for the eradication of religion, official or outlawed. The means for its destruction involved the development of a non-religious calendar and a change of the names of streets and towns in order to remove any religious connotations. The former occupied the time and effort of the best scientists to develop a time scheme shorn of all reference to the Judeo-Christian world and the pagan past. The latter consisted mainly of dropping saints from the names of places, and eliminating blatantly aristocratic names. The final outcome was to name things only in terms of natural conditions.¹⁵ The aim, as Grégoire described the anti-religious phase of the Reign of Terror, was to create the society of atheists that Pierre Bayle had described which would be more moral than a society of Christians.¹⁶ Bayle, in his *Discours sur le Comète*, tried to claim that religion and morality were independent, and hence that a society of atheists could be more moral than a society of Christians. Some of the most irreligious leaders of the Reign of Terror took this as a prescription that an atheistic society had to be created in order to have a moral society.

In 1792 and 1793 the movement for this atheistic society was becoming strong. Ruth Necheles, the leading authority on Grégoire, points out that he neither spoke out nor took any public action to halt it, though he did encourage people to keep up their religion privately and not flee the country. It is not clear what could have

¹⁵ See Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes* (Paris, 1828), Tome I, chap. 1, for a detailed description of the campaign against religion. See also Aulard, *op. cit.*, chap. 3.

¹⁶ See Henri Grégoire, *Discours sur la liberté des cultes* (An III de la Revolution) p. 13.

been accomplished, save martyrdom, by direct opposition to the anti-religious measures going on at the time. Grégoire may have felt that the Republican gains had to be preserved, and that the irreligious excesses would pass away. Indeed, Hébert, Cloots and Chaumette did go to the guillotine, but not before they had established a complete anti-religious policy in the government.

Grégoire's account of the climax of this anti-religious drive is most dramatic. It indicates his answer to the problem, not faced by the American Catholics until the Berrigan brothers, of what does one do when the state acts in direct opposition to one's religious convictions. In 1828, long after the event, Grégoire wrote in Volume I of his *Histoire des Sectes religieuses* a description of the denouement of the irreligious crusade. (The earlier edition of this work in 1810, which Grégoire sent to Bishop Carroll, does not contain the section on the attempt to construct the Religion of Reason.) His description which conforms to that of others, seems based on his personal experience. It follows . . .

A deputy named Jacques Dupont, who died insane, had declared himself an atheist before the tribune of the convention. Grégoire, then in Savoy, heard the news with indignation, regarding the assembly as having become accomplice "par une tolerance criminelle" since they had not expelled him.¹⁷ This incident was followed by an attempt by unbelievers to stop the election of a replacement for the Bishop of Versailles. Then, on 16 Brumaire, An II (November 6, 1793), the Jacobin Club had decided 14-3 that Archbishop Gobel of Paris had to abdicate. Cloots woke up the Archbishop to tell him he had to abjure his errors. The following day the Archbishop, called to the bar of the Convention with several of his assistants, took the view that since the people had elected him they could rescind the election.¹⁸

Accepting the full theory of the Church as organ of the state, Gobel and his assistants gave up their posts. (Grégoire indicated that Gobel did not give up his religion.) Wild applause greeted the Archbishop's resignation and this was followed by others, Catholic and Protestant.¹⁹

Grégoire was not present when Gobel was forced to step down. However, when he entered the chamber, where each declaration of apostasy was being greeted with applause and laughter, the deputies from the Mountain furiously commanded him to abjure and quit his

¹⁷ Necheles, *op. cit.*, pp. xiv-xv.

¹⁸ See Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes* (1828), Tome I, I, chap. iv, pp. 69 ff for this and what follows.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 69-71. Also see Auland, *op. cit.*, pp. 105-106.

bishopric. Grégoire went to the podium and, though interrupted again and again, stated:

I come here, having only very vague notions about what happened before my arrival. I have been told about sacrifice for the country; I am used to that. Is it a question of attachment to the cause of liberty: my proofs have been made for a long time. Is it a question of the revenue attached to the functions of bishop, I give it up with no regrets. It is a question of religion: this article is out of your domain, and you do not have the right to attack it. I hear fanaticism and superstition spoken of; I have always combatted them. But let someone define these words for me, and he will see that superstition and fanaticism are diametrically opposed to religion.

"As for me—Catholic by conviction and feeling, priest by choice—I have been designated by the people to be bishop, but it is neither from them or from you that I hold my mission."

Then Grégoire refused to quit, and defied the assembly to do anything about it. He ended proclaiming, "I invoke the liberty of cults", which was to be his position in the face of a hostile anti-religious state.²⁰

Grégoire's defiance amazed and angered the atheist faction. He was not jailed (Chaumette, one of the leading atheists, had told him earlier that he would have been arrested were it not for the fact that he had done so much for the Revolution); but he did not act to stop the program. A few days later Notre Dame Cathedral was transformed into the Temple of Reason. Statues to four philosophers, Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau and Franklin, were enthroned; the altar was covered over and a goddess of reason was placed in the sanctuary. All churches and synagogues were closed, and the Religion of Reason was made the state religion. Services were to be on the tenth day, since the sabbath had been eliminated.²¹

Grégoire had done about all that could be done. Unlike Gobel, he insisted that he was more than a civil servant, that he was a Catholic and had received his status from God, not man, and that religion was beyond the state in a fundamental sense. Grégoire faced a problem his American colleague was spared, a secular state that had become the enemy of religion.

In the months that followed with the intensification of the Reign of Terror, Grégoire somehow remained an important public official. His whole career is somewhat mysterious for he belonged to no organized faction. He was usually in opposition, fighting for such basically unpopular causes as the rights of Jews, Protestants, blacks and slaves.

²⁰ Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes* (1828), pp. 72-73.

²¹ *Ibid.* The remainder of Book I deals with what happened in the attempt to make reason the official religion and to suppress all traditional religions. See also Aulard, *op. cit.*, pp. 106-131.

Yet he held important government posts. Even under Napoleon and Louis XVIII, when in total opposition, he was appointed or elected, though not allowed to serve. During the Reign of Terror, he was on the Committee for Public Instruction, through which irreligious members were trying to remake the school system into a training ground for their anti-religious views. He was also on the Committee for Public Monuments and Inscriptions, where he saved some from being destroyed, and coined the word "vandalism" for their desecration.²² It was not until after the fall of Robespierre that Grégoire began to seek a solution to the problem of the state and religion.

From 1793 onward Grégoire began to turn to the United States for a solution to the basic conflict in which he was involved. One reason for this was his difficulty in abolishing slavery. After the Haitian rebellion in 1794, France was reluctant to take any steps towards ending slavery. Nevertheless, the liberty of the downtrodden was a crucial step in Grégoire's conception and he saw the possibility of a black republic near America as a most hopeful millenarian sign, an uncorrupted pure republic of Christians. While functioning as the Patriarch of Haiti, he hoped for the Millennial Christian Republic there and offered many plans to its leaders to make it religiously and politically a paradise on earth. As he believed that in America there was more support for the black cause, for the rest of his life he remained with the abolitionists there as well as in England.²³

A few months after the end of the Reign of Terror, at a meeting at which the anti-religious element was proposing civic festivals every tenth day as a means for undermining religious belief, Grégoire appeared in his bishop's robes and demanded freedom of worship. His speech, "Discours sur la liberté des cultes", led to a new solution modeled on that in America, though in France it lasted but a few years.

In the preface, Grégoire pointed out that all the *philosophes* advocated tolerance. Nonetheless people insist, contrary to the facts, that Catholicism is incompatible with republicanism, and persecute the republican priests with special furor:

²² Cf. Carnot, *op. cit.*, Tome VI, p. vii, "Il contribua plus que personne à prévenir la destruction des monuments des arts, et qualifia le premier ce genre de crime du nom de *vandalisme*, terme adopté depuis dans toutes les langues européennes".

²³ On Grégoire's abolitionist work, see Necheles, *op. cit.* A central theme of the book is Grégoire's ongoing attempt to end slavery and bring about equality for blacks. See also Henri Grégoire, *De la Littérature des Nègres* (Paris, 1808), and *De la Noblesse de la Peau ou du préjugé des blancs contre la couleur des Africains et celle de leurs descendants noirs et sangmelés* (Paris, 1826).

During long years I was denounced for having defended mulattos and blacks, for having demanded tolerance in favor of the Jews, the Protestants, the Anabaptists. I have sworn to pursue all the oppressors, all the intolerant ones. Now I do not know how to be more intolerant than those who, after having applauded the declaration of atheism made at the tribune of the National Convention, do not pardon a man for having the same religious principles as Pascal and Fénelon.²⁴

In defense of religious liberty Grégoire first argued that religious opinions could not be changed by force, but only by reason. Hence, people should be allowed not only to hold their beliefs, but to act upon them. In the light of his recent experience in France, he turned to the American solution. The state should sponsor no religious views, but should protect them all, with the exception of those which persecute other religious groups or deny national sovereignty, liberty, *égalité* and *fraternité*. Grégoire claimed his tenets were those of the *philosophes* and of Fénelon, and that it was upon these principles that Holland and America had developed.²⁵

Grégoire claimed that Lord Baltimore and his Catholic followers in Maryland pressed for toleration, and that it is on their principles "that free America has based its power and its happiness".²⁶ In fact, at the Constitutional Convention the toleration clauses of the document were strongly supported by Catholic delegates. Nevertheless, they faced strong opposition with Massachusetts complaining that under the Constitution "a Papist or an infidel was eligible as a Christian".²⁷ It would seem that Grégoire saw only the outcome, and not the bigoted opposition that preceded it. This made it more possible for him to long for the toleration achieved by American Catholics; indeed he may well have exaggerated their role in achieving it.

He also cited the American Catholics as evidence that there is no incompatibility between belief in Catholicism and membership in a republic. Bishop Carroll and the other Catholic leaders in America in their letter to General Washington on his election as President, said the Catholics "have a well-founded title to claim from her [America's] justice, the equal rights of citizenship, as the price of our blood spilt under your eyes, and of our common exertions for her defence".²⁸ Not

²⁴ Grégoire, *Discours sur la liberté des cultes*, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁷ Shea, *op. cit.*, p. 346. See also Torpey, *op. cit.*, p. 20.

²⁸ "Address of the Catholics to George Washington", 1790, signed by Bishop Carroll, Charles Carroll, Daniel Carroll, Dominick Lynch and Thomas Fitzsimmons. Text printed in Guilday, *op. cit.*, p. 365.

only had the Catholics earned their citizenship, they were entitled to complete toleration as well.

It is hard to tell how much Grégoire knew about American debates. A decade earlier John Carroll had come out for complete religious liberty (he did not mention Jews in his statements) and separation of church and state.²⁹ The Catholics had proven they were good Republicans by the role they played in the Revolution and in setting up the new government. What Bishop Carroll saw as resulting from the American situation was an idyllic co-existence of Christian faiths "in this country, so blessed with civil and religious liberty, which if we have the wisdom and temper to preserve, America may come to exhibit a proof to the world that general and equal toleration, by giving a free circulation to fair argument, is the most effectual method to bring all denominations of Christians to a unity of faith".³⁰ On this Grégoire and Carroll had somewhat similar views. While Carroll fought back against attacks from some Protestants, he did so in a benign atmosphere since the Constitution did not support any form of religious repression.

Thus, Grégoire used the American experience as grounds for both universal toleration and the acceptance of Catholics as citizens of the republic. He won his appeal for the liberty of cults. Churches were reopened and for a couple of years France had a genuine separation of Church and state. It then disappeared once again under state control of the churches until the beginning of the 20th century when it was established permanently.

Grégoire's views centered on a millenarian vision that if everyone were free from slavery and oppression, if the Church were purified, then God would bring together everyone including the Jews who would convert. This requires a republic to eliminate oppression, it requires genuine freedom, equality and brotherhood. It is assisted by Enlightenment education which eliminates superstition and barbarism, and by exposing "false views".

In fighting on for his various causes, Grégoire saw signs for his vision in the Napoleonic period. Napoleon re-established Judaism in France by convoking a Sanhedrin in which Grégoire was an adviser to the Jewish delegates. Basically, however, Napoleon undermined the accomplishments of the Republic. His peace with the Pope left Grégoire's Constitutional Church a shambles. The Emperor was adamant against Haiti and against ending slavery. Grégoire fought

²⁹ Melville, *op. cit.*, pp. 88-89.

³⁰ John Carroll, "Address to the Roman Catholics of the United States of America", 1784, cited in Guilday, *op. cit.*, p. 126.

Napoleon and even conspired to overthrow him. In disgust against the Concordat, he went abroad, mainly to Germany and England, where he learned about various religious groups. He also met abolitionists, including the great English abolitionist, Wilberforce, who complained that Grégoire was too republican and too Catholic.³¹

From his travels, Grégoire returned to write two important works. One was *La Littérature des nègres*, answering Hume and Jefferson about black cultural and intellectual inferiority. This work was translated into English in 1810 by the American consul and a copy was given to Jefferson, whom it did not convince. The other major work was *Histoire des sectes religieuses*, originally in two volumes and published in 1810.³² Grégoire told Bishop Carroll that this work grew out of his concern with the variations in religious belief, especially those that he found in France. (He said at one point that in England he heard that Priestley wanted to start a Unitarian Church in France, and that this impelled Grégoire to expose the situation.) The confusion, madness, and potential irreligion of these groups led Grégoire to describe them in an attempt to carry on Bossuet's defense of Catholicism.³³ The first two volumes deal, usually descriptively, with all sorts of sects such as the Muggletonians, Quinte-Monarchists, Dunkers, Abrahamites and "Theophilanthropy", a kind of deism developed into a ritual religion after the Revolution. There is no particular analysis, only occasional comments, but considerable anecdotal material on Grégoire's conversations with leaders of these groups. The volumes were suppressed by Napoleon, partly because of Grégoire's constant support of abolitionists, but probably also because he exposed groups that sought to deify Napoleon.³⁴ In the preface to the six volume second, or 1828, edition, Grégoire mentioned that he and Bishop Carroll were concerned about the same issue, namely that non-Catholics knew about Catholicism only imperfectly. In three letters to Bishop Carroll covering 1810-1815,³⁵ Grégoire pressed the need to

³¹ Necheles, *op. cit.*, p. 179.

³² Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1810-1814).

³³ Grégoire, *Histoire des Sectes*, (1828), Vol. I, "Observations préliminaires", pp. 1-3; and Grégoire's letter to Bishop Carroll, Paris 10 Sept. 1810, Archives of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, 4B5. I should like to thank the archivist, Rev. John J. Tierney for xeroxed copies of three letters of Grégoire to Bishop Carroll.

³⁴ On the flyleaf opposite the title page it says "Cet Ouvrage, saisi en 1810, par ordre du Ministre de la Police Générale, a été rendu à l'Auteur dans le mois de juin 1814." All copies of the book were seized and in 1814 fifty were returned to the author.

³⁵ *Ibid.* (1828), Tome I, 3, "Le venerable Carroll, archeveque de Baltimore me ecrivait". Grégoire letter to Carroll, Feb. 1815. "Monseigneur, je reponds un peu

expose the absurdity of various sects which had sprung up, especially since 1700.³⁶ He pointed out that some forms of Protestantism lead to deism which, while other forms of Protestantism, lead to fanaticism and absurd practices. He was publishing this, he said, to show, "that the picture of new variations of Protestant sects since the time of which Bossuet spoke proves again what aberrations men are led to who have the misfortune to abandon the pillar of Catholicism, the column of truth".³⁷

Presumably with freedom for, and adequate information concerning, all the sects—which, of course, did not include Catholicism—and with the shining example of purified Catholicism, people would be led to the true religion. No longer would state action or religious coercion be desired or required to bring about Grégoire's millenarian dream. All that was needed was a free republic with complete tolerance, information and education.

In contrast, Bishop Carroll was a mini-millenarian. He saw freedom of religion and the separation of Church and State as means to the unity of the Christian sects in Catholicism. But in a country where only one per cent of the population was Catholic, toleration was a first need, and next the opportunity to propagate the faith. Hence, Carroll pressed also for equal opportunity to communicate his message. To this end, he founded the first American Catholic seminary at Emmitsburg and a college at Georgetown. At the same time, he encouraged Elizabeth Seton in her own endeavors for Catholic education. The American situation of toleration and independence from state control made it possible to present the Catholic Church, in contrast to all Protestant Churches, with the hope that all would join together.

Nevertheless, Carroll's statements do not have the strong millennial flavor and fervor of Grégoire's. Though the latter was not a prophetic millenarian expecting Apocalyptic events by certain dates, he did see the Revolutionary and Napoleonic Ages as guided by the Divine Spirit and thought they might soon bear fruit.³⁸ For instance, he considered the Paris Sanhedrin to possess a supernatural quality that

tard a votre lettre". Baltimore Archives 4B7. The three letters indicate that there was much more correspondence.

³⁶ Grégoire's letters to Carroll, 4B5, 4B6, 4B7.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, Feb. 1815, p. 1, 4B7.

³⁸ His chapter on "Nouveaux Millénaires" in *Histoire des Sectes* (1828), II, shows that he read the millenarian literature, Protestant and Catholic. He seemed to approve of the views of Lambert, Lacunza and Agier, without committing himself to the projected dates. In Vol. III, p. 427, Grégoire saw the slow conversion of the Jews to Protestant and Catholic Churches as a Providential sign of progress.

might soon bring Jews and Christians together.³⁹ He was concerned especially with creating the conditions for the Millennium, namely a purified Church with equal men living in republics and free to express their beliefs. In contrast, many Protestant millenarians saw the developments from 1789 to 1815 as part of the unfolding of the scenario in the Book of Daniel and the Book of Revelation. They saw Napoleon's capture of the Pope as the overthrow of the Anti-Christ, his Egyptian campaign as the beginning of the Reestablishment of the Jews, and the Sanhedrin as the Reconstruction of the Jewish State. Most of these interpreters also saw Napoleon as the final form of the Anti-Christ.⁴⁰

To summarize this picture of the struggle for religious freedom, especially of Catholicism, in America and France, the American Catholics had an easy road. Other than isolated Protestant bias, little opposition existed and the new Republic adopted a very tolerant position almost without intellectual or theological argument. This would appear to be due to the fact that the deists were indifferent, the Protestants were too divided to coalesce around a state religion, and the remarkable freedom of the Constitution did not supersede the restrictive statutes of the states. Nonetheless, except for the grisly battle with the Mormons, the American solution seems to have worked out better than any other. The conflict still goes on in many countries, viz. Israel, Lebanon, etc.

In Vol. II, p. 373, he wrote, "Let us reflect that each day leads us towards the consummation of the centuries, the period when *there will be no more time*". Also Grégoire liked the English Millenarians who decided Napoleon was the Anti-Christ. See Vol. II, pp. 347-348.

³⁹ *Ibid.* (1810), Vol. I, p. 201. On this see R. H. Popkin, "La Peyrère, the Abbé Grégoire and the Jewish Question in the Eighteenth Century", in *Studies in Eighteenth Century Culture* IV (1975), pp. 209-222, esp. note 49.

⁴⁰ A great many such authors are discussed in Leroy E. Froom, *The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers* (Washington, D. C., 1948), Vols. II and III. "The effect of the French Revolution and the European upheaval upon the prophetic interpretation was profound and inaugurated a new era in the study of the Apocalypse. In recording the deeds of the French Revolution, even historians called attention to the seeming fulfillment of inspired prophecy. History thus rose to its most exalted height as it became the interpreter of prophecy". Vol. II, p. 782.

Among the works of the time are James Bicheno, *The Signs of the Times* (London, 1799); *The Crisis of All Nations* (London, 1800 and 1806); George Stanley Faber, *A General and Connected View of the Prophecies Relative to the Conversion, Restoration, Union and Future Glory of the Houses of Judah and Israel; the Progress and Final Overthrow of the Antichristian Confederacy* . . . (London, 1809); and James H. Frere, *Eight Letters on the Prophecies Relating to the Last Times* (London, 1813).

In France, the European home of liberty, the conflict took on an opposite character. There the Church was the enemy of the revolutionary state, and the state deliberately tried to dechristianize, essentially to de-Catholicize, society and to establish a state religion of reason in a society 99% Catholic. The heterodox Grégoire pressed the problem, first trying to make the Church a state institution. When that failed in the Reign of Terror, he turned to the American solution with his bill for the liberty of cults, which briefly created the same religious freedoms as existed in the United States.

While recognizing that God alone could bring about the Millennium, Grégoire made clear throughout his long career that his concern with religious tolerance and with liberty for Jews, Protestants, blacks, and others, was part of a millennial crusade. This is also true of his principle work, *L'Histoire des Sectes religieuses*, which includes Judaism, deism and atheism as sects. Its premise is that the vagaries, absurdities and disadvantages of the sects will lead to their reuniting with reformed Christianity. During the Revolution he was accused of a desire to Christianize France and to Protestantize Catholicism. This millenarian defense of freedom of religion was used to a lesser degree by the American Catholic leader, John Carroll.

As a last point, I should like to ask whether such a defense is adequate, for it requires a religious outlook which is no longer shared by many. It is probably the case that some religious groups in America see their situation of toleration as an opportunity to spread the truth they possess to all, as well as a protection from those who disbelieve them. Probably even Jews tacitly hold such a view. Unlike Catholics, they did not come to America as the land of religious liberty, and the attempt to set up a Jewish state in the U.S. in the early 19th century was a total failure. Nonetheless, Jews have pressed for freedom of worship, and have seen, at least according to some prayers, that keeping up the worship will finally bring everyone to the true God when the Messiah comes. But the strength of the pluralism in the American situation probably lies elsewhere, at least partly in the semi-scepticism about whether any group has the truth. For many, this kind of doubt suffices as a reason for keeping up the competition of faiths.

Possibly what has made our situation work is the combination of the doubters and the believers as well as a division of believers, so that none really overpowers the other faiths and non-faiths. America began with competing millennial groups, plus a few Jews and an elite of deists. No other country has had as much division at the outset—one only has to read Grégoire on the American sects he knew. Perhaps

it was as much the uniqueness of the situation as the wisdom of the Founding Fathers that has given us our religious freedom. France, for all its zeal for liberty, equality and fraternity, could not achieve religious freedom with so powerful a Church at loggerheads with an Enlightenment state. The accidents by which the original colonies were formed and developed spared them the problems that have torn apart so many other societies trying to achieve a satisfactory relationship of church and state. The sceptical indifference that has grown greatly is willing to leave the Churches alone, if they leave the state alone. A tension exists here, as one sees in the Supreme Court decisions about school cases. The hard-line adherents of no state support for any religious activity in schools, whether Christmas carols or Christmas-Chanukah celebrations, seem to be a combination of non-believers, liberal Jews, and a few liberals of other Protestant sects. The others, including the Catholics, risk getting into the problems of the French solutions, that is, of government supervised religion and perhaps government religion.

One might claim that the genius of our contribution to the problem of religious liberty lies in a wonderful balance of forces between competing and often biased religions which are powerless to eliminate each other through political means, and a not too aggressive irreligious group that is not anxious to achieve more than keeping religion out of the state institutions. The religious and irreligious possibly share the millennial view that out of the conflict of ideas, religious and irreligious, truth will emerge. Until then, error cannot do much more than harm the person living in it. Hence, by design or by accident we have emerged, the first to do so in Western intellectual history, with a way of balancing religious beliefs and state activities without conflict. The contrast between what happened in France and in the United States and the way in which the two Bishops, Carroll and Grégoire played their respective roles in seeking a satisfactory outcome may help us appreciate and treasure our heritage.*

* Some of the research for this paper was done with the help of NEH Grant No. RO-22932-75-596. I should like to take this opportunity to thank the NEH for its generous assistance.

PHILOSOPHY AND THE HISTORY OF PHILOSOPHY

There seems to be a strange relationship between philosophy as studied by philosophers and the history of philosophy. Philosophy is almost always studied, written about, taught, in terms of what historical figures from Thales to Wittgenstein and Heidegger have said. Yet there is a very strong tendency among philosophers, especially those of our century, to reject any historical study of the subject, to reject any historical interpretation, and to reject the historians of philosophy as part of the philosophical enterprise.

This kind of reaction does not occur in other humanistic or scientific disciplines. The history of art, literature, history, music, is regarded as relevant to the study of these subjects. The history of mathematics, science, and medicine is at least regarded as interesting if not relevant to present studies in these disciplines. What is the difference in the case of philosophy?

First, philosophy supposedly deals with something timeless, *The Truth*, so that when and where philosophical claims were or are made is not relevant to whether they are true. Second, philosophers from Thales to the present assert that they have found The Truth. Hence, what came before them or after them is of no philosophical interest. In contrast, creative writers, painters, musicians, do not think they have written the *last* work in the field. They may think it the best. But they would not close down museums, libraries, and concert halls because of their achievements. Philosophers, however, are often willing to eliminate the study of the history of philosophy, since what called itself philosophy in the past was just confusion and error. They are willing to curtail access to the historical past through what they encourage and discourage as proper activities of students, professors and publishers.

In the thirty-nine and one-half years that I have been teaching in philosophy departments, I have heard and participated in dreary discussions concerning whether study of the history of philosophy is part of what a philosophy department should engage in; whether historians of philosophy should be in philosophy departments, and whether advanced students should be expected to have some or much knowledge of the history of philosophy. Over the years I have been challenged about whether what I do is *philosophy*.

By now I am not sure what *philosophy* is, but I am aware that people who discuss the issue of philosophy versus the history of philosophy are part of the history of philosophy. All of us here who are members of philosophy departments are historical beings who write or have written our *curricula vitae*, have outlined our historical development from student days through our professional careers. We have compiled our bibliographies, usually in chronological order. When we consider candidates for positions, and students for fellowships, we examine historical information about them—who they studied with, what grades they received, what classes they have taught, what they have published, etc. Many people in our profession begin articles by giving us historical information about whom they discussed their ideas with, who gave them a grant to work on the paper, etc. They include the historical information, the author's name and institutional address. And they hope to find references to their articles in the citation index.

Since we are all imbedded in history, living historical lives in historical situations, why is a historical perspective so alarming? Over and over again I have been told there is a critical difference between *doing philosophy* and discussing what has been done. The first activity, supposedly, is ahistorical, the second historical. Well, the first is obviously historical too, since it, if we know about it, occurs in historical time in some historical situation. Some say that is irrelevant. The content of the doing, not the circumstances of doing, is what counts. Spinoza spelled this out very clearly in the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus*, chap. vii, where he claimed that the Bible had to be studied as a historical document, but Euclid's *Elements*, which can be easily understood by anyone in any language, did not:

"... we can follow his [Euclid's] intentions perfectly, and be certain of his true meaning, without having a thorough knowledge of the language in which he wrote... We need make no researches concerning the life, the pursuits, or the habits of the author; nor need we inquire in what language, nor when he wrote, nor the vicissitudes of his book, nor its various readings, nor how, nor by whose advice it has been received.

What we here say of Euclid might equally be said of any book which treats of things by their nature perceptible."

So, for Euclid, Spinoza, and others, historical and philological questions are extraneous to the understanding of their work. When Spinoza wrote this, as a matter of historical fact, he was working on the most ahistorical philosophical presentation offered up to then, the *Ethics*. In contrast, the Bible and other works require historical

exegeses to make them intelligible. The reader needs to know when they were written, how they were written, why they were written, to fathom the meaning.

Of course Spinoza turned out to be wrong about Euclid and about Spinoza. The analysis of the order of composition of the *Elements*, the development of terms like "axiom", and the limitations of the mathematics of Euclid's time, all are now valuable parts of understanding the *Elements* and of understanding why Greek geometry did not reach the stage of non-Euclidean geometry. Spinoza was a failure in his own terms, and is now being reinterpreted because of a wealth of new information about his background, the conditions under which his works were written, his relations with Millenarian and libertine thinkers, etc.

Spinoza and Wittgenstein each tried to achieve the philosopher's dream—to present pure thought and to work out the implications without historical and nonphilosophical materials. They both failed, and immediately became marvelous cases for historians of philosophy to study.

Spinoza's presentation of his ideas *more geometrico* supposedly freed his presentation from facts about the author, from considerations of nonphilosophical issues of context, influence, etc. The work would stand solely on its logical merits. The work appeared independent of the author, though in the *Opera posthuma* of B. D. S.—not just the *Opera* or *Opera posthuma*—without reference to the historical author. The work was carefully developed over many years, according to his surviving correspondence. Yet it took very few pages and very few propositions before the author started adding notes to explain the significance of various propositions. Spinoza added his polemical appendix to Book I to make sure the reader realized this was not just metaphysical or theological geometry; this was serious. It was a demolition of supernaturalism. By Book III Spinoza added introductions to explain the relationship of his thought to Descartes's. He added conclusions and didactic summaries to show what his analysis was accomplishing. Books IV and V contain autobiographical information to explain various propositions. Spinoza's discussions of the merits of going to the theater, of how much money one should morally accept from benefactors, etc. clearly apply aspects of the life of the historical Spinoza to the purported geometrical presentation of his philosophy. By the end, when one is supposed to see everything from the aspect of eternity, the work cries out to be seen from the aspect of temporality—to be seen as the intellectual autobiography of one of the makers of the modern mind.

Wittgenstein's *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* was also a monumental attempt to present a philosophy ahistorically with its intricate numbering of propositions and its aphoristic style rich in implications. It came to public notice only through the historical intervention of Bertrand Russell, after many, many publishers turned it down. Russell's intervention plus his introduction, gave to Wittgenstein's *Tractatus* a historical setting, and so the reader could place it in twentieth-century thought. The work, from its title onward, brings up historical resonances. Why the title? Is it related to Spinoza's title and purpose? Why the numerology? Why the aphorisms? Why the images from Sextus Empiricus? Spinoza? Schopenhauer? Saint Augustine? Why the discussions of Frege and Kant?

I have no expertise about Wittgenstein. But from what has appeared of his unpublished writings, from memoirs of his students and colleagues, from his correspondence, and from the researches into his background by such scholars as Allan Janik, Stephen Toulmin, and William Bartley, it is clear that he has left work for historians of philosophy for decades to come. Instead of being ahistorical, he has become a wonderful historical mystery. Library shelves groan under the mass of Wittgensteiniana. For anyone who wants to understand him there are hosts of historical and philological problems. The most rudimentary are linguistic. How can one tell if one is reading what Wittgenstein wrote unless one knows German, knows something about the peculiarities of Viennese German, etc? Students and colleagues tell me that they trust the translators, but do they have any basis for their confidence? Many who knew Wittgenstein report that he found it extremely difficult to put his ideas into words and that he had many special usages of terms. It seems most unphilosophical, knowing that translating is an art and not a science, to trust the translators so completely.

Wittgenstein's mass of unpublished material may throw much light on what he was trying to say. Each new publication appears to add significantly to discussion of his views. The problem of editing his works may go on for decades. The memoirs of students and associates, the letters of his friends, also appear very relevant, and the investigation of his context with end-of-the-century Vienna where Weininger, Mauthner, Freud, and others played such significant roles, and where the Catholic remnant of the Holy Roman Empire became a small socialist state. All of this changed the intellectual scene. Jewish intellectuals were just beginning to be able to play a serious role. Historians will be studying for years to unravel the strands that are woven into Wittgenstein's canvas, both from his days in Vienna and

from his time in Cambridge. It is sad that his own ahistorical attitude of many of his readers will make the editing, the translating, annotating, and commenting on his text more difficult, since many of those involved have already deliberately deprived themselves of the needed linguistic and historical tools and methods.

I am told that many people do not care about the above. They just want to think about what Wittgenstein had to say. Fine! Good! But how will they do this unless they have an accurate text with adequate explanations? Even Hume's texts require some information about how the English language has developed, how Scots used certain terms in the eighteenth century. One can reiterate the claim that a text says what it says. But one still has to find out what it says. Also, some of us feel there can be more accurate texts, such as Locke's *Essay* printed on the basis of what is in his papers, Hume's *Treatise* printed with the corrections he wrote into Lord Kames's printed copy. Isn't it better, more worthwhile, to discuss accurate than inaccurate texts? (After all we, as historically living authors, correct galleys, object to misprints in our own work, and try to make readers aware of our intentions as to linguistic expression. We feel it would be unfortunate if we were criticized or held up to ridicule, or refuted, on the basis of a misprint. Why shouldn't we feel the same way about other authors, living or dead?)

Further, I would recommend that historical information can make a difference, and in some cases a substantial difference. Let us consider our other ahistorical author, Benedictus de Spinoza. I tell people that any historical biographical account of Spinoza, written before the records and materials of the Spanish-Portuguese Jewish community of Amsterdam became available in the 1960s, is inaccurate and grossly misleading.

The Amsterdam Sephardic community was unique in Jewish history in many ways. Most of its leaders, including the chief rabbi, Saul Levi Mortera, and Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel and Rabbi Judah Leon Templo, had little or no Jewish training, and lived some part of their lives as Christians or in Christian communities. Many of the leaders had studied in Catholic universities in Spain, Portugal, France and Italy. Some of them, including Menasseh and Templo, mixed freely with Christians, and worked on intellectual projects with them at the time Spinoza was their student. The school system included studying what was taught in Iberia in philosophy. Its emphasis on Jewish studies inverted the normal order. Talmud was studied last, not first. (Spinoza was excommunicated before he took the last class.) The community was extremely cosmopolitan, including people from all over Europe, Brazil, the Levant, and North Africa.

Before we had access to the records, most of our information was based on three accounts written by Christians a couple of decades after Spinoza's death—those of Pierre Bayle, Colerus and Lucas. Colerus's, which had the most influence, was based mainly on what Spinoza's last landlord and landlady told him. Lucas was probably a disciple of Spinoza, anxious to create a saintly image. Bayle did more research, inquired of many people who knew Spinoza. Bayle's less than completely sympathetic picture was pushed aside for the more pleasing picture of the blessed Spinoza, who was so ahistorical, thinking eternal thoughts and seeing the world from the aspect of eternity, that he could not be bothered with the offer of a chair at the University of Heidelberg or with visiting the Prince of Condé. Bayle had found out that Spinoza was offered the chair at Heidelberg, that he wanted to accept it, and then the offer was withdrawn when Spinoza would not promise not to dogmatize (whatever that may have meant). Bayle also found out from eyewitnesses that Spinoza met the Prince of Condé and spent some time with him. Bayle's editor, Pierre Desmaizeaux, knew one of Condé's physicians, who saw Spinoza enter Condé's chambers day after day, and knew the libertine Dr. Henri Morelli, an Egyptian Jew, who discussed Condé's offer to Spinoza with Spinoza himself. (Condé offered Spinoza 1,000 écus per annum to be a house philosopher at Chantilly. Spinoza, according to Morelli, refused, not because, like Greta Garbo, he wanted to be alone, but because he feared that Condé was not powerful enough to protect Spinoza from Catholic bigots.)

The publication of Henry Oldenburg's letters and the researches of Gustave Cohen and Paul Vernière and the new edition of K. O. Meinsma show Spinoza as part of two incompatible worlds after the excommunication, that of the Millenarians and the pious Collegiants, and that of the libertines in Condé's entourage, who were connected later on with the English deists. Quaker historians have found that Spinoza became associated with the Quaker mission in Amsterdam right after his excommunication, and I have found that he, most likely, translated two Quaker tracts into Hebrew in 1657-58.

What does this barrage of new data indicate? If Spinoza's work is at all to be explained by his context, his situation, then we have to deal with the known facts, not the myths. Spinoza was taught not by a Mortera, renowned Talmudist, but by Saul Levi Mortera, whose Jewish education in Venice could not have lasted beyond age 13. He was not a Talmudic authority. Spinoza, in opposing him, was opposing a quite different kind of Jewish view.

Spinoza's *Tractatus* is anything but timeless. The author stated that it could only have been written in seventeenth-century Holland,

where freedom of thought and expression was possible. The work can be understood only in terms of Spinoza's relationship to the Judaism of his community, and in terms of his involvement with the pious creedless Christianity of the Quakers and the Collegiants and with his reading of Dutch, English and Spanish political history of the time. We now know there was a rebellion of several budding Bible critics in the Jewish community of 1656, influenced by La Peyrère's *Men before Adam*, Jean Bodin's unpublished *Heptaplomeres* and an early stage of the anti-religious polemic, *Les Trois Imposteurs*, *Moses*, *Jesus* and *Mohammed*, were circulating. In terms of this it is becoming possible to assess what is original in Spinoza's analysis of religious knowledge, and what he might have been trying to accomplish in the intellectual and political situation then existing in Holland.

I stress all of these relatively new data about Spinoza to show how historical research can make a philosophical text more intelligible. One can say that the *Tractatus* is not a pure philosophical text. But, except for the *Ethics*, what is? Even the *Ethics* becomes more intelligible when set in Spinoza's actual social milieu, not his legendary ahistorical isolation.

What I say about Spinoza is to a greater or lesser degree the case about Locke, Hume, and many other thinkers. In this century important new works by or relating to Descartes, Locke, Leibniz, Berkeley and Hume among others have been discovered. Some are now part of our standard background, like Descartes's *Conversations with Burman*, Berkeley's *Commonplace Book*, Hume's *Abstract* and *Letter to a Gentleman* (which we will soon learn was never written as a book or intended to be one).

In the face of all this, can one say that history of philosophy is unneeded or irrelevant? If one finds, as a historical thinker, that one wants to or needs to think about what other historical thinkers have thought, can one do this ahistorically? If not, then the historian plays a role, beneficial one hopes, in making the *doing of philosophy* at any given time and place in history, possible. I am not contending that historical study replaces or takes over the *doing of philosophy*. But philosophizing out of history still occurs in history, and for better or worse, seems to feed on historical texts or previous historical thinkers. Those who claim to have found the Truth in 1985, will, I am sure, report their findings in terms of its links with both the personal history of the truth-finder, and the history of the problem-solvers the truth-finder has built upon or combatted. We are historical beings, and cannot escape our own history or our cultures. So, then, shouldn't we try to profit from it, both by following Socrates's injunction to

know ourselves and the further injunction, to know as best we can how we got to our present intellectual situation, personally and culturally, and what we can do about it.

XXI

CUDWORTH*

It is a daunting and humbling challenge to try to say something significant, different and novel about the achievements of Ralph Cudworth, Regius Professor of Hebrew. When I was first invited to give the lecture on the occasion of the three hundredth anniversary of Cudworth's death, two topics occurred to me that might merit examination—Cudworth and the Jews in seventeenth-century England, and Cudworth and Newton, dealing in part with Newton's unpublished notes on Cudworth's *True Intellectual System*. When I brought myself to pore over the eight hundred ninety-nine pages of the *True Intellectual System*, I saw this was not the dreary, boring, overly erudite work that commentators had described, nor a work sorely out of touch with the philosophical discoveries of the time. In the fourth and fifth chapters, which most people who "dip" into Cudworth, find stupefying, there is an interesting, maybe even exciting development of religio-philosophical thinking, based in some measure on a partial scepticism, in some measure on a Millenarian response to the Jews, and in greatest measure to a new, and short lived defense of the Christian religion based on exploring the foundations of pagan theology, ancient and modern. The defense seems to be like what is considered Newton's most original contribution to theology, though Newton and Cudworth drew exactly opposite conclusions about the true character of Christianity from it. To appreciate Cudworth's contribution in this regard, it is best, I think, to try to place him in the sceptical currents of his time, in the Millenarian argumentation, and in the budding development of comparative religion.

Starting with the latter, Renaissance humanist scholarship and sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Bible scholarship brought up an inordinate amount of information about the religious beliefs of ancient Egyptians, Babylonians, Persians, Romans, about the diverse beliefs of different fringe groups of ancient Judaism and early Christianity. More recent data of the explorers, missionaries and colonizers was daily producing an enormous amount of information about Chinese, Indian, American, Polynesian religious beliefs and practices. Attempts were made to summarize, to classify, and to evaluate all of

* A lecture given on June 28, 1988 on the occasion of the 300th anniversary of the death of Ralph Cudworth, at Christ's and Immanuel Colleges, Cambridge.

this in various early seventeenth-century compendia, like the works of Brerewood, Alexander Ross and others. Artists like Bernard Picart, sought to illustrate the religions of the world (in six volumes and two hundred fifty plates).

What was one to make of all of this data? Some, like Isaac La Peyrère, Claude Saumaise, and young Baruch de Spinoza, were developing a view that all, or most religions, were the result of historical developments that had nothing to do with the Scriptural world. They were produced by non-Adamites, people not descended from or related to the Biblical Adam. Some or all religions were the result of human fears and superstitions, and of political machinations by people seeking power. In contrast to the naturalistic or deistic and heretical reading of the data, an attempt was made to show that the vast collection of material about the varieties of religious belief reinforced Christian belief and clarified it. Assuming as a good Jew or Christian should, that all of the variety of religious believing went on in the world created by God, as described in *Genesis*, and among the many many descendents of Adam and Eve, then all of the variety should exhibit something about God's revelation to mankind, and mankind's unfortunate misunderstanding, willful or unconscious. What is needed is a taxonomy of religious belief, a way of classifying it in order to understand what it represents.

The attempt to create such a taxonomy became, fittingly, as a commentary on Moses Maimonides's quite brief treatise on idolatry. Moses Maimonides, the great medieval Jewish sage, was a major source of wisdom and insight among seventeenth century Christian thinkers, especially Protestant ones. As Saint Thomas was set aside (including his *Summa Contra Gentiles*), as a Scholastic Catholic, whose arguments were not useful in the dynamic world of seventeenth century Millenarian Protestantism, Maimonides became significant as a source of information about Judaism, as a reconciler of religion and science, and as an evaluator of non-revelatory religion. His various works were edited, translated into Latin, and commented on. The short treatise on idolatry was translated and edited by young Dionysius Vossius in 1632. He was a student of the rabbi, Menasseh ben Isreal, of Amsterdam. Young Vossius died suddenly, and his father, Gerard Johannes Vossius, published his son's edition of Maimonides's brief treatise with a massive commentary entitled *De theologia gentili et physiologia Christiana, sive origine ac progressu idolatriae* in 1641, a work which went through eight editions by 1700.

Gerard Vossius, the father of Isaac Vossius, is a Cudworth-like figure. People pay homage to his learning, but try to avoid looking into

his works. He was a very important humanist and theologian. He had been a professor of theology at Leiden, and lost his post after the Synod of Dordrecht. He became professor at the *École illustre* of Amsterdam, and was offered a chair in England. He wrote voluminously on Greek and Latin literature, on the theater, on philosophy and religion. He corresponded with a wide range of European intellectuals from Mersenne and Gassendi, to Archbishop Laud, Hugo Grotius and Herbert of Cherbury among many others. He used his great erudition in his commentary that was appended to his son's edition of Maimonides to try to show that if one did a taxonomy of what is known of pagan religious beliefs and how they developed, one would find traces of man's original religion, given by God, and of the Scriptural Revelation. Such a study would reinforce Christian belief by making pagan beliefs intelligible as vestigial fragments of the true religion and as degenerations from it.

Vossius, like the Florentine and Cambridge Platonists, accepted the *prisca* theology view that a clear divine revelation was given to Moses that trickled down, and became corrupted in pagan views, when idolatrous elements were introduced, connections made between natural events and divine personalities and forces. By tracing back what is known of the earliest forms of pagan theology, then following later developments, and by identifying which traces of Hebrew theology could still be discerned (such as the Moses figure in Moccus, Mises, Moso, Palaestinus, Jockim and Mellalu), one could understand the origin and history of heathen mythologies and cults. Vossius's text is a handbook of mythology, ancient and modern. The author contended that various mythologies are picturesque descriptions of historical events, of natural phenomena and of social conditions. Vossius sought to uncover what led to the formation of these myths, and to idolatrous practices. He did this not only as an early anthropologist, like Isaac La Peyrère, but as a literary humanist, sifting out texts rather than facts and artifacts.

Some have seen Vossius as an innovator in Christian apologetics rather than a founder of anthropological research. He did not see that anything could be achieved by carrying on scholarly discussions about revealed truth or religious history. His own career may have made him only too aware of how these learned exercises led to more and more divisions and quarrels. Like his friend, Hugo Grotius, he was in favor of religious peace rather than intellectual confrontation (a view much like that that Cudworth held during the Puritan period and the Restoration). Therefore, after developing his taxonomy of paganism, which would provide intellectuals with a way of understanding how most of the world had strayed from and confused the

original revelation, Vossius devoted much of his huge opus to showing what natural knowledge of God could be found from examining created nature. This would eliminate confusions that had led to so many theological quarrels, and might make pagans agree to simple and charitable precepts. In saying this, Vossius refused to draw the conclusion that Herbert of Cherbury did, that natural religion suffices. "Vossius held firmly to the idea that, besides the truth which man could come to through his own reason, revealed truth is necessary." [C. S. M. Rademaker, *Gerardus Joannes Vossius (1577-1649)*, Assen: Van Gorcum, 1981, p. 309]

Cudworth and Newton studied Vossius's text. Cudworth discussed Vossius's views, and, as we will see, expressed some disagreement with him on a basic theological point. Newton's copy of Vossius's work indicates great concern about what is in the early part of the work, on the origins of gentile theology, and Newton's papers entitled "On the Origins of Gentile Theology" rely heavily on Vossius's materials.

Cudworth was much more of a philosopher than Vossius, and saw that to justify using the taxonomic and natural approach to ground Christian theology, one would first have to reject the so-called rational theology of either the Scholastics or of Descartes. And I think a very important reason for the difference in approach between Vossius and Cudworth is the entry of Cartesian method and ideas into the intellectual arena. Vossius published his text in 1641, when Descartes was just beginning to be known, and Vossius had written it a few years earlier. Cudworth was writing after his colleague, Henry More, had first advocated Cartesianism and then later severely criticized the view. Cudworth started from a criticism of Cartesianism much like that that More offered in his *Antidote to Atheism* and *Immortality of the Soul*. Both of them set forth their views as an answer to atheism.

More, in order to dispense with Cartesian certainty, offered what I have elsewhere called an "incurable scepticism", saying that we cannot be completely certain of anything, because our faculties may be misleading or unreliable. We may, Descartes's claims notwithstanding, be misled every time we reason. *But*, anyone who would doubt everything because of this possibility, is mad, or bereft of any sanity. More then offered his views as as certain as any reasonable person could wish.

Cudworth, having seen consequences of Cartesianism in Hobbes and Spinoza, avered that problems arose if one insisted "That Whatsoever is *Incomprehensible* is *Unconceivable*", [p.638; all quotations are from the 1678 edition of *The True Intellectual System*] and that we cannot only know that of which we can have clear and distinct

ideas. Our finite minds are imperfect, so imperfect that we cannot have a conception of God "as doth perfectly *Master Conquer* and *Subdue*" God's Nature. We cannot even have an adequate or commensurate idea that can match or equalize the object—God. "Now it doth not at all follow from hence, because God is thus *Incomprehensible* to our *Finite* and *Narrow Understanding*, that he is utterly Unconceivable by them, so that they cannot frame any *Idea* at all of him, and he may therefore be concluded to be a *Non-Entity*. For it is certain, that we cannot fully *Comprehend* our Selves, and that we have not such an *Adequate* and *Comprehensive Knowledge* of the *Essence* of any Substantial thing [638] as that we can perfectly *Master* and *Conquer* it. It was a Truth, though abused by the Scepticks, that there is something Incomprehensible in the *Essence* of the Lowest Substances." [639] This, for Cudworth, includes bodies, objects of sense, time and motion. "*Truth is Bigger than our Minds*, and we are not the *Same* with it, but have a lower Participation only of the *Intellectual Nature*, and are rather *Apprehenders* than *Comprehenders* thereof. This is indeed One Badge of our *Creaturely State*, that we have not a perfect *Comprehensive Knowledge*, or such as is *Adequate* and *Commensurate* to the *Essences* of things..." [639]

So, Cudworth presented his case against atheism and for Christianity within the limits of human understanding, limits which amount to a sceptical doubt about any basic or fundamental knowledge of the real nature of God, man or the world. But, like More, Cudworth insisted on the plausibility of his views and the implausibility of his opponents' position. What Cudworth proposed was first a rejection of rational theology, whether Scholastic or Cartesian, and then a substitution of inductive, plausible evidence based on the taxonomy of human beliefs about God and the world, and the evidences from nature that should convince one of God's existence. Further, Cudworth, like Vossius, insisted this led to Christian and not just natural belief, and tried to show the plausibility of Christianity from Jewish sources, from prophetic predictions, from basic human religious beliefs, etc. Although we might not have rational comprehension of God, and how He or She operates in Nature and History, we can conceive in terms of the way people have thought and written of God, and the way Nature appears to operate that God exists, and that the Judeo-Christian revelation is correct.

Cudworth, when he stated his partial scepticism about what we can know, then contended that our inability to comprehend God, an infinite, eternal Being, does not preclude our ability to conceive of such a deity. The modern atheists (primarily Hobbes and Spinoza)

claim if something is incomprehensible, it is impossible. But Cudworth argued, it is reasonable that there was always something in the world, something infinite in duration, eternal without beginning. Otherwise why is there now something rather than nothing? "Wherefore it cannot be accounted less than *Extreme Sottishness* and *Stupidity* of Mind in these *Modern Atheists*, thus to impugn a Deity, from the *Impossibility* of Infinite Duration without beginning." [642] Even the atheist must realize what now exists must come from something. So we can reject two theorems of the atheists—that whatever we cannot experience as a sensible idea or phantasm, or what we cannot fully comprehend, does not exist. [643]

The atheists pretend that the words "infinite" and "eternal" signify nothing, but only represent men's ignorance. People have raised up a "Bugbear" because they cannot understand. However Cudworth answered, "We have shewed with *Mathematical Evidence* and *Certainty*" [645] that we have to accept that there is something eternal and infinite. "To sum up all therefore, we say that *Infinite* and *Eternal*, are not Words that signifie *nothing in the thing itself*, nor meer Attributes of *Honour, Complement and Flattery*, that is of *Devout* and *Religious Non sense, Error and Falsehood*, but Attributes belong to the Deity, and to that alone, of the most *Philosophick Truth* and *Reality*. And though we being *Finite*, have no *Full Comprehension* and *Adequate* understanding of this *Infinity* and *Eternity* (as not of the Deity) yet can we not without some *Notion, Conception* and *Apprehension* thereof, so long as we can thus demonstrate concerning it, that it belongs to something, and yet to nothing neither but a *Perfect Immutable Nature*." [645-46] Cudworth went on to reject Descartes' God who could change even mathematical truth, by offering a "reasonable" explanation of God's Infinite Power—He or She "can *Produce* and *Do*, all whatsoever is *Possible*, that is whatsoever is *Conceivable*, and Implies no manner of Contradiction: the very *Essence* of *Possibility* being no other than *Conceptibility*." [647] (Is this the source of Hume's much over-worked maxim, that whatever is conceivable is possible?)

Cudworth then went on asserting "And thus has the Point been stated all along, not only by Christian Theists, but even the Ancient *Pagan Theologers* themselves." [647]

Although this last statement comes up over two-thirds of the way through *The True Intellectual System*, it underlies a great deal of what has preceded. For Cudworth the basic answer to atheism, ancient and modern, is that pagan thinkers as well as Jewish and Christian thinkers, have all been aware of the idea of God as an infinite and

eternal being, including the atheists who knew this idea when they were denying a being corresponding to it existed. Chapter IV, which as Cudworth said, is practically a book in itself, (it comprises almost six hundred pages), begins refuting the atheist view that there is no idea of God, and there is no such thing existing in Nature, or at least no possible evidence of it.[192] "God" is not just a word without signification. There are different words for God in different languages, and "men have the same *Notion* or *Conception* in their Minds answering to them all", [192] So there must be something being talked about and thought about. It is "a *Monstrous Sottishness* and *Stupidity* of Mind, or else Prodigious Imprudence, in these Atheists to deny, that there is any *Idea of God* at all, in the Minds of men, or that the Word hath any *Signification*". The atheists must have some idea in their minds of what they are denying.

The bulk of chapter IV is to set forth the evidence that pagans, Jews, Christians and Muslims all expressed, however obscurely, the idea or belief in one God. Going carefully through a wide variety of ancient authors, pagan, Jewish and Christian, Cudworth carefully built up his case. Following the taxonomic method of Vossius, he classified all sorts of pagan views, and showed in many cases that they derived from Biblical ones. (Cudworth claimed Democritus got his theory from Moschus, which was another name for Moses, a point stated in Vossius' *De Idolatria*.) The vast inspection of pagan views is supposed to show that despite the presentation of polytheism in many pagan authors they did not believe in a plurality of supreme beings. After examining all sorts of views, Cudworth said, "And now we see plainly, that though there was a Real Controversie amongst *Pagan Theologers*, (especially from *Aristotle's* time downward) concerning the *Cosmogonia* and *Theogonia* . . . the *Temporary Generation* or *Production* of the *World* and the *Inferior Gods*; or whether they had any Beginning or no; yet was there no Controversie at all, concerning the *Self-existency* of them, but it was Universally agreed upon amongst them, that the *World* and the *Inferior Gods*, however supposed by some to have existed from Eternity, yet were nevertheless all derived from one *Sole-Self-existent Deity* as their Cause". [253] Cudworth insisted that the pagan thinkers put a difference between "One Supreme Unmade Deity", and all their other *Inferior Generated Gods*. [255] The pagans had many Proper Names for "One and the same Supreme God". [256]. The only pagan view which verged on substantial polytheism was Manichaeism.

With stupefying detail Cudworth sought to show that pagan views properly classified and analyzed, all (with maybe one exception) involved belief in a supreme God. Hence, the historical experience of

pagans and Jews and Christians all showed the naturalness of such a belief, the unnaturalness as well as unreasonableness of atheism. The study of paganism, in almost any of its written manifestations, exhibits traces of the true God.

At this point in his much too long exposition, Cudworth turned to one of his main sources, the treatise of Gerard J. Vossius. Cudworth had culled his material from a great many Greek and Roman sources. Sextus Empiricus was a prime one for ancient beliefs, Cudworth drew from early Church Fathers, from Talmudic and early medieval Jewish sources, and from Vossius's *Origins of Gentile Theology*. Cudworth called Vossius "this Learned Philologer", and cited long passages from his text in Latin, and then gave translations of them. The portions he dealt with presented Vossius's theory "that according to the *Natural Theology*, the Many Pagan Gods, were but so many *Denominations of One God*". [526] Cudworth, though agreeing with Vossius's taxonomy, and explanation of the derivations of various pagan views, apparently felt that his predecessor went to far in naturalizing pagan beliefs. He "doth plainly straiten and confine the *Notion* of this *Natural Theology* too much, and improperly call the God thereof, the *Nature of Things*; however acknowledging it such a *Nature* as was endued with *Sense* and *Understanding*". [526] Cudworth felt this made paganism into the atheistic view of Epicurus and Strato. If one substituted, Cudworth said, "*that Great Mind or Soul of the whole, which Pervadeth All Things, and is Diffus'd through All*; (which was the True God of the Pagan Theists)" [527], then the view of Vossius that they all believed in one God "will be unquestionably true"—the pagan poetical and political Gods "were but One and the same *Natural or Real God*", who was called by several names, and worshipped in different manners. The general defect of paganism was the admission of lesser deities, with supposedly some divine powers.

This led Cudworth to consider whether Trinitarianism could have come out of this natural pagan view. The kind of Trinity found in Plato or Plotinus, of monad, mind and soul, goes back to Parmenides, and then to Pythagoras, and to the Orphic Cabbala, and to the Zoroastrian beliefs and the Chaldaic oracles. [546-8]

This Trinity of Divine Hypostates is thus a most ancient doctrine, but "it cannot well be conceived". [547] how such a view "should be discovered meerly by humane Wit and Reason, though there be nothing in it (if rightly understood) that is repugnant to Reason." [548] Even the most ancient writings of the Old Testament have terms suggesting a plurality in the Deity [Elohim?] Thus, as Proclus said, the Trinity was first presented in the Divine Cabbala by the Hebrews, and

then communicated to the Egyptians and other nations. The mystery was gradually imparted to the world "and that first but sparingly to the Hebrews" in their written or oral Cabbala, and more fully under Christianity. This doctrine only got clearly stated when the early Christians had to contend with various heresies. The Platonists, not having this clarity, made the Trinity three Gods.

In examining how the doctrine became clarified, Cudworth contended that one can see that Arianism, the denial of Jesus' divinity, is a form of paganism, and the formulation by Athanasius is the true religious view. (Cudworth's colleague, Isaac Newton, was to spend forty years or more trying to prove just the opposite—that Arianism was true Christianity, and that Saint Athanasius had corrupted true Christianity by foisting pagan Trinitarianism [a form of polytheism] upon it.) Athanasius, Cudworth said, was someone "we can think no otherwise than as a person highly Instrumental and serviceable to Divine Providence for the preserving of the Christian Church". [620] (Newton, *au contraire*, described Athanasius as the arch-conspirator who introduced anti-Christian views that took over the true original church.)

Cudworth saw in the Platonic notion of the Trinity, derived from the Jewish Cabbalistic one, an anti-Arian position. The fact that such a view went back to pagan and Jewish antiquity, indicates that the original revelation, deflected in various forms, nonetheless denied the really corrupt pagan view that got incorporated into Arianism, "a kind of *Paganick* and Idolatrous Christianity". [620]

Having used the taxonomic method to show that Trinitarian Christianity is the correct expression of the most ancient revelation to the Hebrews, and to the rational pagans, Cudworth turned to attack a view that was becoming a different kind of threat—the interpretation of all religious traditions as social and political developments. After dismissing the psychological atheistical challenge to religion—that it is merely the product of fear and concern about future events, Cudworth turned to another atheistical view, that religions result "from the *Fiction* and *Imposture* of *Civil Sovereigns*, *Crafty Lawmakers* and *Designing Politicians*" [655] who use religion to get people to obey them. Spinoza and Hobbes are quoted (but not named) as advocates of this view.

The social and political interpretation of religion would undermine the value of the Vossius-Cudworth approach. No matter what resulted from the taxonomic research, all religious formulations could be accounted for as the result of political developments. The similarities just showed that the problem of gaining political control over people

has been more or less the same at all times and places. Cudworth argued against the implausibility of such an interpretation of human history, and the inability of such a view to account for the idea of a supreme deity that people have, or for the commitments that they make to this deity.

Before looking at the details of Cudworth's response, a couple of things should be mentioned. Curiously, Cudworth's main source for his answer is the critique of atheism in Sextus "the philosopher", that is, Sextus Empiricus, the Greek sceptic who opposed all sorts of dogmatisms, including dogmatic atheism. Cudworth's use of Sextus, rather than of Plato, Aristotle, the Church Fathers, or anyone else, is, I think, unique. I have shown elsewhere that Sextus, even called "le divin Sexte" by a seventeenth-century French sceptic, was used to justify belief without reasons—fideism, by Catholics and Protestants from Montaigne to Pascal to Bayle. Sextus' arguments were used to bring about suspense of reason on epistemological, metaphysical and theological matters. Then it is contended, one should believe on faith, not on evidence.

Cudworth was not in this Christian fideist tradition. But he saw that Sextus had levelled a devastating attack on atheism as a dogmatic position. (Of course he did the same with theism, but Cudworth ignored that.) Sextus is quoted at length six times in five crucial pages, in Greek and then translated into English. No other thinker is used as much in support of Cudworth's response. And it is curious to see classical scepticism used to undermine modern atheism on the eve of the Age of Reason when it would be used over and over again to undermine Judeo-Christianity.

A second preliminary observation is that in the period when Cudworth wrote *The True Intellectual System*, there was a great deal of concern with the political interpretation of religion. Machiavelli had offered such a view, of course exempting Judaism and Christianity, and Hobbes in *De Cive* and *Leviathan* had done the same. In 1656 Henry Oldenburg reported from Oxford that a theory was being offered that Moses, Jesus and Mohammed were political imposters, who set forth religious views in order to gain political power. The theory, the thesis of the notorious *Trois Imposteurs*, was floating around the European intellectual world. It was rumored that there was a book, setting forth the evidence for the thesis. Queen Christina offered one million dollars for a copy, but could not obtain one. Oldenburg begged his friend, Adam Boreel, the leader of the Dutch Collegiants, to write an answer to save Christianity. Boreel wrote a huge answer, *Jesus Christ, Legislator of the Human Race* which was never

printed. Robert Boyle and Henry More had copies. So Cudworth probably knew of the thesis and of Boreel's answer from his close associate, More. Cudworth surely knew Boreel who was involved, as was Cudworth, in the negotiations on re-admitting the Jews to England in 1655. Spinoza also apparently knew of the thesis, probably from Boreel, whose group took Spinoza in after his excommunication from the Synagogue in 1656.

Cudworth's discussion shows no direct concern with the thesis, though this must be part of the background. Spinoza's formulation, published in 1670, was used by Cudworth as the statement of the view he had to oppose. [656] When he began his answer, Cudworth conceded that politicians "may sometimes abuse Religion and make it serve for the promoting of their own private Interests and Designs". [691] But this would not explain the universality of the religious phenomena. Religion is everywhere, "it is not conceivable, how *Civil Sovereigns* throughout the whole World, some of which are so distant, and have so little Correspondence with one another, should notwithstanding all so well agree in this *One Cheating Mystery of Government*, or Piece of State Cozenage". [691] Also how should they be able to take in all of mankind "(as well wise as unwise) with such a Constant *Fear, Awe* and *Dread* of a meer *Counterfeit thing*, and an *Invisible Nothing*;" [692] which has no basis in sense or reason. Further, if religion is a fraud, is it not strange that in the whole history of the world, people should not have "suspected or discovered this *Cheat* and *Juggle* of Politicians, and have *Smelt* out, a *Plot* upon themselves, in the *Fiction* of *Religion*, to take away their Liberty and enthrall them under Bondage". [692] Every other fraud has been discovered, and then lost its hold. Atheists for two thousand years "have continually buzzing into mens Ears that Religion is nothing but a meer *State Juggle* and *Political Imposture*, but this has not been given any credit in all this time. So religion appears to be "deeply rooted in the *Intellectual Nature* of man". [692] The case of Christianity shows this since it was not founded by any policy to promote any political ends.

That theistic religion is no fraud or imposture is also shown by the fact that all mankind agree in acknowledging a Supreme Deity, an eternal and necessary being, as Cudworth's and Vossius's taxonomy has shown. Sextus is then quoted as saying that everyone has a view, "prolepsis", about God, that he is a living Being, perfect, etc. Even Epicurus used this notion in opposing God's existence. "No, I say that if there be no such thing as this Existing, and this *Idea of God* be a meer *Fictitious Thing*", [692-93] then the idea is arbitrary, and it is inconceivable that everyone except a few atheists should agree

"in one and the same Arbitrarious Figment". Sextus Empiricus is then quoted to the same effect. For, after all, how could statesmen and politicians all over the world, before any international communication "should universally Jump, in one and the same *Fictitious* and *Arbitrarious Idea*".

Further, if there were no God, "it is not Conceivable" that the idea of God would have been formed by any one. Lawmakers could tell people all sorts of things, but this does not put such an idea in their minds. Words do not become ideas. Words are only sounds and phantasms. They can be the occasion of the soul exciting such notions "as it had before itself" whether innately or adventiously (from experience). "Wherefore the meer *Telling* of men, There is a *God*, could not infuse any *Idea* of him into their Minds, nor yet further giving this Definition of him, that he is a *Being Absolutely Perfect, Eternal* and *Self-Existent*" could not make people understand, or have the idea, if they did not have the notions within their minds. So could a lawgiver have the idea, supposing there is no God, and convey this non-entity to others? "And this was Judiciously Hinted also by the same *Sextus*". [694] (A text from *Adversus Mathematicos* is then given.)

But atheists will say, we can feign ideas. What about golden mountains, centaurs, etc? These are compounds of ideas we already have. Cudworth insisted "the Mind cannot make any new New Cognition, which was not before, but only *Compound* that which *Is*." We cannot invent new colors. We cannot make something out of nothing, nor can we make or compound ideas that imply contradictions. The example offered is *Triangulare Square*. It is a contrafictitious thing, and thus has no possible existence, and "therefore is not *Conceivable* as such" though both "triangle" and "square" are conceivable. Even God, with all of His Power, cannot make a positive idea of something that has no positive existence. [695] [Compare this with Hume's mathematical discussions, in *Treatise*, Book I, Part ii]

Cudworth next challenged the claim that the idea of God is a compound or an aggregate of existing things. If so, then we should each have arbitrary, different ideas. But, as the taxonomy and appeals to Sextus show "the *Idea* of *God*, is One most Simple *Idea* of an *Absolutely Perfect Being*", [695] even though it is partial and inadequate. The partial conceptions are not items in the world, but must be from a Being with the properties.

The atheist may claim that we not only can compound ideas, we can also amplify them. Sextus is quoted as stating how the idea of God could be developed by increasing features of our idea of man.

Thus Sextus "the Philosopher" is used to show that we could never by this means arrive at an idea like "absolute perfection" which was not in the original data. [696]

Gassendi had raised the point that maybe the idea of God is like that of "infinite worlds" or infinite matter. Cudworth replied these are "Ill put together" words. "Infinity" is a real feature in nature, not a mental fiction, as are "world" and "matter". They just do not fit together. [697]

Then Cudworth concluded the discussion of the political interpretation of religion by saying, "Our humane Soul cannot Feign nor Create any New *Cogitation* or Conception, that was not before, but only variously compound that which Is, nor can it ever make a Positive *Idea* of an Absolute nor Possible Existence". [697] Our imperfect beings could not create the idea of an Infinitely Perfect Being out of Nothing. "We affirm, therefore, that Were there no God, the *Idea* of an *Absolutely* or *Infinitely Perfect Being* could never have been *Made* or *Feigned*, neither by Politicians, nor by *Poets*, nor *Philosophers*, nor any other". [697]

After discussing some of the evidence of the works of the Deity (miracles), and attacking Spinoza's views about this, Cudworth offered a version of the argument from prophecy to show that Christianity was the right formulation of the ancient natural and revealed religion. [711] Unlike the deists who were to follow immediately after him, Cudworth tried to keep both as the same. He asserted that there is a kind of prediction of future events that cannot be accounted for by "the Natural Presaying Faculty". It has to come from the *Supernatural* Prescience of God. This kind of prediction occurs when there is a great distance in time between events, and no obvious causal chain (in other words, when the course of event could be otherwise because of contingencies).

It has been known for ages that "there is a Foreknowledge of Future Events" [712] that are naturally unknowable to the generality of mankind. Various classical texts, like those of Cicero indicate this. However, Scripture triumphs over paganism in this in that scriptural predictions have to involve supernatural foreknowledge. Cudworth offered examples from Jewish history, the coming of the Messiah, the rise and fall of empires, the prophecies in *Daniel* and *Revelation* up to the end of the World, which he claimed required supernatural revelation.

"And thus do we see plainly, that the *Scripture-Prophecies* Evince a Deity; neither can these possibly be imputed by Atheists as other things, to mens *Fear* and *Fancy*, nor yet to the *Fiction of Politicians*.

Nor do they Evince a *Deity*, but confirms Christianity also, by the predictions of its reception." [714]

The latter point also involved Cudworth's answer to Judaism and his Millenarianism. From early in his career, Cudworth was actively involved with the Millenarian concerns of the Puritan period. The effort to bring the Jews back to England where it was hoped they would convert as the prelude to the thousand year Reign of Christ on Earth, predicted in *Revelation*, reached its apex with the appointment by Cromwell of a commission to negotiate with Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam, self-appointed agent of the Jewish world. Cromwell padded the commission with ardent Millenarians and philo-Semites. The recently appointed Regius Professor of Hebrew at Cambridge, the Reverend Ralph Cudworth, was one of the appointees. We know that he met with Menasseh privately both in London and at Cambridge. He asked Menasseh why he did not accept Christianity. On one occasion Menasseh gave him a Jewish manuscript refuting Christianity, and on another he sold Cudworth a different Jewish anti-Christian manuscript for 10 pounds. We are told that Cudworth was upset, even incensed, by the contents of these documents. There are unpublished writings in the British Library in which Cudworth was working out his answer. In 1659 he had finished a treatise on the book of Daniel. This is a lengthy manuscript on the seventy weeks mentioned by Daniel. (Henry More indicated this was given at least in part as sermons at Cambridge.)

Cudworth claimed the prophetic predictions in *Daniel* clearly showed (a) that the predicted messiah came in the person of Jesus, and (b) that the fulfillment of his career, the Second Coming and the Thousand Year Reign, predicted in *Daniel* and *Revelation* would soon occur. The "seventy weeks" provide a means of calculating when these events will take place. The teacher of More, Cudworth, Milton and Barrow, Joseph Mede, had put this at 1,260 years after the Fall of the Roman Empire, which indicated the mid, or latter part of the seventeenth century. Cudworth, a moderate during both the Puritan and the Restoration periods, did not become an activist Millenarian, but like his friend, More, saw the fulfillment of Scripture prophecies as still going on, and leading to a culmination fairly soon, that would involve the Jews accepting Christianity and returning to the Holy Land. Cudworth, therefore, regarded the material he got from Menasseh as a stumbling-block to the glorious finale of human history, and felt obliged to write an answer.

From all of Cudworth's discussion of Scripture, prophecy and refuting atheism, he concluded that although we cannot demonstrate

God's existence a priori, we can have certain knowledge of God and of Christianity. This certain knowledge "from the *Necessity of Irrefragable Reason*". [716] is not logically demonstrable, but is established by reasoning, from facts we cannot doubt (like our own existence). Such reasoning which Cudworth even called a Demonstration, shows "*That the thing is, though not Why it is*". [716]

Before resting his case Cudworth presented his answer to the radical scepticism of "a late Eminent Philosopher" [716], apparently Descartes, though the formulation offered is that of the radical scepticism of Pascal's *pensée* 434, published in French in 1669,—"*that there is no possible Certainty to be had of any thing, before we be Certain of the Existence of a God Essentially Good: because we can never otherwise free our minds from the Importunity of that Suspicion, which with irresistible force may assault them; that ourselves might possibly be so made, either by Chance, Fate, or by the pleasure of some Evil Demon, or at least of an Arbitrary Omnipotent Deity, as that we should be Deceived in all our most Clear and Evident Perceptions; and therefore in geometrical Theorems themselves, and even in our Common Notions*". [717] If we believe God is Essentially Good and neither will nor can deceive "then and not before, will this *Suspicion* utterly vanish" and we can be certain and trust our faculties. But, on a voluntarist theory like Descartes', one "can never be reasonably Certain, of the Truth of any thing, not so much as that Two and Two are Four" since "an *Arbitrary Omnipotent Deity*, might designedly make them [people] such, as should be deceived in all their *Clearest Perceptions*".

Since the Cartesian solution depends on knowing that God is essentially good, this involves using our suspect faculties—"this I say is plainly to move round in a *Circle*, and to prove nothing at all". [717]

If we are to claim to have any certainty at all about God's existence "we must of necessity explode this *New Sceptical Hypothesis*". [718] So Cudworth insisted, no power no matter how great, even omnipotence itself "can make any thing to be indifferently either True or False". Truth, Cudworth insisted, cannot be arbitrarily made. It is! Intelligible ideas of the mind, those clearly perceived, are true, and cannot possibly be false. This Platonic view allowed Cudworth to dismiss Cartesian doubts about general truths, as well as the radical, irremediable scepticism stated by Henry More. If one has rational understanding and one knows what "part" and "whole" are, and "cause" and "effect", then one cannot conceive a part to be greater than a whole, or an effect to be precede a cause. "Wherefore we may presume with Reverence to Say, that there could not possibly be a

World of *Rational Creatures* made by God, either in the Moon, or in some other Planet, or else where, that should *Clearly and Distinctly Conceive*, all things contrary to what are clearly Perceived by us; nor could *Humane Faculties* have been so made, as that we should have as clear *Conceptions of Falsehoods* as of Truth". [718] God cannot do anything contradictory, that is, repugnant to conception. "So that Conception and knowledge are hereby made to be the Measure of all Power, even Omnipotence". [719] And the same does not apply to human perceptions, sense experience, where we can only be sure of how things seems to us.

But can created human beings pretend to absolute certainty of any thing? Cudworth claimed that by participation in the Divine Mind, they should be able to know certainly that $2+2=4$, the whole is greater than the part, and "such like other *Common Notions*, from which are the *Principles* from whence all their knowledge is derived". [721] If we could not have such certainty, life would be a mere dream or shadow, and we should be naught but "a *Ridiculous* and *Pompous Piece* of Phantastick *Vanity*". "It is no way Congrous to think, that God Almighty should make *Rational Creatures* so as to be in an utter *Impossibility*, of ever attaining to any *Certainty* of his *own Existence*; or of having more than an *Hypothetical Assurance* thereof, *If our Faculties be True*" (which may possibly be otherwise) than there is a God. Enough of Descartes' scepticism. Cudworth proceeded to advance his Platonic Christian theology, and to insist that it is reflected in the history of human thought and in nature. He concluded, "there is One only *Necessary Existent*, the Cause of all other things, and this an Absolutely Perfect Being, Infinitely Good, Wise and Powerful; Who hath made all that was Fit to be made, and according to the *Best Wisdom*, and exerciseth an exact *Providence* over all Whose Name ought to be Hallowed and Separated from all other things". [899]

Having developed this immense rational answer to atheism, and defense of Christianity, Cudworth either had second thoughts, or saw a different side of the story when he summed it all up in his preface. Can the understanding of God's world be just the result of human rational effort? He answered, no!—"it will not follow from hence That whosoever shall Read these Demonstrations of ours, and understand the words of them, must therefore of Necessity, be Convinced, whether he will or no, and put out all manner of Doubt or Hesitancy, concerning the Existence of God".[***] A spiritual development is also needed, because were there any passionate concern involved, men's judgments might be "Clouded and Bribe", and people might remain sceptical. Unshaken confidence of "so High a Truth as this, the Existence of One Perfect Understanding Being, the Original of all things"

requires a mind cleansed and purged from vice. Both rational faith and Scripture Faith are more than mere believing in arguments or historical facts "but a certain higher and diviner power in the Soul, that peculiarly Correspondeth with the Deity". This Christian Platonic note seems to be the final resting place of Cudworth's case.

Looking back on his forbidding 899 pages, one can see, I think, that Cudworth undertook a monumental effort to resolve a crisis of confidence in revealed religion produced by the flood of polytheistic information, and by the naturalistic explanation of the varieties of religions offered by Hobbes and Spinoza that would undermine the special status of Judaism and Christianity. Cudworth saw that one had to limit the rational expectations of an answer below the level set by Descartes, and that one had to rest the case first on the taxonomic analysis. Using the treasure house of taxonomy worked out by Vossius, Cudworth proceeded to "justify" Trinitarian Christianity as the *Ur-Religion*, the primal revelation. He used a semi-scepticism and a commonsense Platonism to rebut the overall attack of Hobbes and Spinoza, thereby "justifying" the appeal to universal religion based on an innate conception of an infinite deity.

Cudworth's solution, weighty as it was, hardly lasted a day beyond its publication in 1678. Even before the publication, Herbert of Cherbury had used Vossius's taxonomic data to show that natural, unrevealed religion was the basic human belief. Right after Cudworth, the deist, Charles Blount, used Herbert's efforts and more of Vossius's material, plus a forceful use of Spinoza's political and psychological explanation of the origins of religion to launch the deistic attack on Judaism and Christianity. Soon thereafter Newton, Whiston and Clarke used the Cudworth-Vossius material to argue for anti-Trinitarian Christianity. And further taxonomy brought into question whether Judeo-Christianity was the *Ur-religion*, or whether it was just one of many derivations (as claimed in the *Turkish Spy* or in Toland and Tindal). Nonetheless, Cudworth's solution was treated as a dominant bulwark against rising deism and naturalism. His enormous opus was translated into Latin and was read and commented on all over Europe and America.

Sad to say, on this occasion, Cudworth was pushed aside as scholarly unsound by the first historian of modern philosophy, Jacob Brucker, who brushed the Cabbalistic, Pythagorean, Platonic views aside as unclear, unsound and unphilosophical. Hume, hitherto unnoticed, turned Cudworth into ridicule. From the *Treatise* through the *Enquiries*, the *Natural History of Religion*, and the *Dialogues concerning Natural Religion*, Cudworthean themes are used to establish the

sceptical-empirical point of view. Cudworth's defense of religion is made into buffoonery—into the final last gasp of the previous superstitious age.

Thereafter Cudworth, though often mentioned was hardly ever read, even though his treatise was reprinted into the nineteenth century. By seeing him in his context, in the crisis caused by the realization of the ubiquitousness of polytheism, by the possibility of a naturalistic explanation of religion, we can appreciate he was trying to answer these threats. His uncompleted work was the best that could be done, but it was drowned in the rising waters of deism and naturalism. Cudworth represents, perhaps, one of the last of the rational theologians, and as such, an interesting key figure in understanding the passage into the Age of Reason, and into the age of fideistic and fundamentalistic religious theories. He and Newton were perhaps the last to try to keep literal historical belief in the Bible consonant with the best of modern science and modern thought. If we can consider Cudworth as a man of his times, we can gain a greater appreciation of the enormous intellectual traumas of that age, and the roots of our own ideology. It is perhaps time to start studying Cudworth and to stop scoffing at him, in order to understand how we got to where we are today.

XXII

ROADS THAT LED BEYOND JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY*

For more than three centuries emphasis has been placed on the warfare between science and theology, and the apparent victory of science as the way the modern world got beyond Judaism and Christianity (if it ever did). The cases of Galileo and Spinoza and the Salem witch trials have been examined and re-examined as the dramatic episodes that showed how old-fashioned religion, in the guise of Catholicism, Judaism and Protestantism, tried to stifle free thought, with the result that although Galileo recanted, Spinoza was excommunicated, and the Salem witches were killed, the modern scientific mind triumphed in the 18th century and produced the modern secular world. Without arguing the merits or demerits of these cases, I should like today to examine some less known and less emphasized developments within the Jewish and Christians worlds of the 17th century that pushed beyond Judaism and Christianity into forms of religious humanism and secular humanism, and provided some of the crucial elements of our modern world view. These developments are, in large measure, different from the tendencies towards scientific atheism, that emerged so forcefully in the period of the French Revolution, though there is some overlap in ideas and thinkers.

My concern with these "religious" roads that led beyond Judaism and Christianity, has come out of my long interest in the history of modern scepticism. For forty years I have been arguing that modern scepticism emerged from the religious controversies of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation, and that a sceptical defense of Christianity was offered by Catholics like Michel de Montaigne and Protestants like Pierre Bayle. During the last twenty years or so I have been writings on the application of scepticism to religious issues by 17th-century Bible scholars and religious reformers. This application became the basis of the critical deism of Tom Paine and the atheism of Robert Ingersol. But its original intention and import was to reveal the vital, relevant portions of the Judeo-Christian heritage.

I have also been exploring for the last decade or so the use of sceptical weapons by Jews against Christians and Christians against

* Lecture given at the Folger Shakespeare Library, March 1988.

Jews in the 17th century, and the way this prepared the way for the rejection of both religions by Voltaire and Baron d'Holbach in the French Enlightenment.

So, I should like now to explore some of the issues that were involved, some of the anticipated results by the parties involved, and some of the ways the sceptical materials became transformed.

Let us start with the issues that led to what is now called the Higher Criticism of the Bible. In the mid-17th century, a French Protestant, probably from a Spanish-Portuguese Marrano, that is, from crypto-Jewish background in Bordeaux, presented three theses—that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, that we do not possess an accurate text of the Bible, either in the Hebrew Old Testament or the Greek New Testament, and that the Bible is not the history of all mankind, but only of a small group of Jews. The author of these theses was Isaac La Peyrère, 1596-1677. (I have just published the first book length study of him, *Isaac La Peyrère, 1596-1677: His Life, Work and Influence* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1988), contending that he was a central figure, long forgotten, in the making of the modern mind. Maybe my evidence will convince people and he will again be given the prominent place he occupied in the intellectual worlds from the 17th to the 19th centuries.)

La Peyrère was a courtier, who in 1640 became the secretary to the Prince of Condé, the second ranking nobleman in France (who thought he ought to be the first, the King). La Peyrère, we are told, spent much of his time discussing theology with the Prince, who was the protector of the sceptics and other avant-garde thinkers of the time. (The Prince and his son, *le grand Condé*, protected the early scientists, the sceptical followers of Montaigne, playwrights like Molière, and rebellious Protestants.) By the time he came to work for the Prince, La Peyrère had already started on his infamous theories. As a child he had asked who was Cain's wife. If the human world after Cain killed Abel consisted of Adam, Eve and Cain, why did God put a mark on Cain's head, so *others* would not harm him? How could Cain have moved to a city, and gotten married, if there were no other people? The French Reformed Church tried to expel La Peyrère, but his family was powerful enough to get sixty leading pastors to defend him. He next asked how could Moses have written the portions of the Pentateuch that describe the death of Moses and what happened thereafter? In a work that took form around 1641, La Peyrère offered some hypotheses to explain these matters—(1) that the Scriptural text that has come down to us is a mess, "a heap of copie of copie" as he said, that is full of errors; (2) that there were people before Adam,

who are the ancestors of Cain's wife, of Lilith, and other unaccounted for persons in the Bible, and (3) therefore, the Bible is not the history of all mankind, but only of the Jews.

In saying this, La Peyrère claimed he was presenting a most serious message—that Jewish history is *the* important history, is Providential history, and that Jewish history went through three stages, from Adam to Jesus, the election of the Jews as the central actors of world history; from Jesus to mid-17th century, the rejection of the Jews, when the Gentiles were grafted onto their stock and made central; and the recall of the Jews, which will occur at any moment, when the Jews, led by the King of France, will reestablish the Holy Land, rebuild the Temple, and with the Jewish Messiah, will rule the world, and everybody—Jew, Christian, gentile, Adamite, pre-Adamite, post-Adamite, will be saved.

The biblical criticism allowed La Peyrère to rewrite the Scriptural text a bit, and interpret it to meet his desires. It also allowed him to incorporate all of the data gathered by the explorers, by the students of Greek, Egyptian, Babylonian history, by traders in China and Japan, by explorers and colonizers in America, into a polygenetic picture of where the varieties of mankind come from. Except for the Jews, everyone else is descended from non-Adamites, people who existed before and independently of Adam, the first Jew, not the first man. All the different cultures came from stocks of separate human species that have existed from time immemorial. *But*, everyone will be saved by the imminent climax of Jewish history, the arrival of the Jewish Messiah. (La Peyrère accepted Jesus as the spiritual Messiah for the Gentiles, and expected a second Messiah, who might be Jesus in the flesh, as the Messiah for the Jews, who was due very soon.) I stress the universalism imbedded in La Peyrère's Judeo-centric picture, since it will be important in our story.

La Peyrère wrote up his case, dedicated it to Cardinal Richelieu, who promptly banned it. After Richelieu died, La Peyrère published the glorious final part, *Du Rappel des Juifs, The Recall of the Jews*, in 1643, anonymously. The very pious Father Mersenne, the friend of Descartes, Galileo, Hobbes, Pascal and other luminaries, circulated the work, and told people it contained some most interesting interpretations. The full text, with the Bible criticism and the pre-Adamite theory, was published in Latin in 1655 in five editions in Holland and Switzerland, and in English in 1656, under the title, *Men before Adam*. It is dedicated to all the synagogues of the world. The Folger Library has a fine copy which comes with La Peyrère's map of the Holy Land, a map that would delight Prime Minister Itzhack Shamir

and the Zionist ultra-nationalists, since it shows "Terra Sancta" as extending from the Nile to the Tigris, including the best part of Egypt, all of Saudi Arabia, Palestine, Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, and half of Iraq. It is not for nothing that La Peyrère has been called the first Zionist! Queen Christina of Sweden had just abdicated her throne, and was living temporarily in Belgium. She met La Peyrère there. She had known him for years. She read his unpublished work, and is supposed to have paid for its publication, just before she converted to Catholicism.

Needless to say, the book was banned and burned all over Europe for its many, many heresies. The author was arrested and was told he would only get out of jail if he converted to Catholicism too, and personally apologized to the Pope, which he did. He told Pope Alexander VII that his heresies were due to his Calvinist upbringing which taught him to read the Biblical text according to his own reason. But, since everyone, Jew, Catholic and Protestant, rejected his reasoning, he looked for an authority, and lo and behold, there was the Pope who could tell him how to read the Scriptural text. The Pope accepted his apology and offered him a post in Rome. La Peyrère chose to return to Paris, where he was first the librarian for the Prince of Condé, and then a lay member of the pious order, the Oratorians. We are told that he spent the rest of his life gathering evidence for his pre-Adamite theory, and re-writing his magnum opus so that it might escape censorship. When he died a friend wrote his epitaph:

"Here lies La Peyrère, that good Israelite, Huguenot, Catholic, finally Preadamite. Four religions pleased him at the same time. And his indifference was so uncommon, that after eighty years when he had to make choice, that good man left and did not choose any of them".

For La Peyrère, I have tried to show, the central reason for scepticism about the accuracy and authenticity of the Biblical texts was to make people realize the imminent change that would occur in the world—everyone would be in bliss in the Messianic world. La Peyrère had few proposals about what to do to prepare for this, other than to bring the Jews back to France, the land of liberty, let them establish a Church that had no doctrines that would be offensive to Jews. What La Peyrère described is the Church that Mary, the mother of Jesus, and John the Baptist belonged to, namely the first century synagogue. He also proposed eliminating political and social anti-semitism. When La Peyrère was apprised of a real Jewish Messianic movement going on, that of Sabbatai Zevi, he showed no interest, and

refused to meet Sabbatai's agent in France. In some peculiar way his Messianic scenario was linked to French nationalism and the fortunes of the Prince of Condé.

La Peyrère greatly influenced the real Bible scholars, those who studied the Hebrew and Greek texts, the many manuscripts, and the histories of Judaism and Christianity. La Peyrère met and influenced Rabbi Menasseh ben Israel of Amsterdam; his work was in Benedictus de Spinoza's personal library, and was used extensively in Spinoza's biblical criticism. Father Richard Simon, the greatest of the 17th-century Biblical critics was a personal friend, and a fellow member of the Oratorians.

A careful examination of what is known about the young Spinoza, based on recently uncovered records from the Amsterdam Synagogue, indicates that six months or so before his excommunication in 1656, Spinoza and two associates started advancing some of La Peyrère's views about the incoherence of the Biblical text in Sunday school lessons they were giving. They also advanced the view that Chinese history was older than Biblical history. So, it would seem that La Peyrère's views made an immediate impact on the bright young men of the Amsterdam Jewish community. We know that in 1655-56, Menasseh ben Israel wrote a refutation of *Men before Adam*, which was never published, and which has not been found. By the time Spinoza wrote out his criticisms of the Bible, he was steeped with views from La Peyrère about how inaccurate and incoherent the existing text was, and why Moses could not be the author.

Spinoza, shortly after his excommunication, came in contact with another Bible critic—the English Quaker, Samuel Fisher. Fisher was the only early Quaker who was a university man, and who knew Hebrew. In 1656-57 Fisher was in Amsterdam. I have recently published evidence that Fisher and Spinoza worked together translating two Quaker pamphlets by Margaret Fell for the conversion of the Jews. One of these was printed, and I have just republished it (with the collaboration of Michael Signer). If Spinoza was the translator, as seems to be the case, this would be the first publication of Spinoza and his only work in Hebrew. The text comes with a letter in Hebrew by Fisher to the Jews urging their conversion. Fisher also attended the synagogue and treated it like a Quaker meeting. He said he argued for three or four hours after each service with the Jews. Fisher left Amsterdam in 1657 to go off and convert the Pope and the Sultan, with results that are well known. Somehow he survived and returned in good health and good cheer to England in 1660, where he published *The Rustic Alarm to the Rabbies*, a nine hundred page

attack on those who try to find the Word of God in a printed text, or a parchment scroll. Fisher went over the problem of the Mosaic authorship, the variants in different Scriptural manuscripts, the sad history of the transmission of the text as described in the Bible, and in the history of the copyists thereafter, the human decisions involved in including some works and excluding others in both the Old and New Testaments, the absence of vowels in the original Hebrew text, and of omega subscripts in the Greek text, the corrupt Jews and Catholics who "preserved" the text, the corrupt printers, the problems of translators, and on and on. Almost every example used by Spinoza in the *Tractatus* of 1670 appears in Fisher's *Rustic Alarm to the Rabbies* of 1660.

The point of Fisher's historical and philosophical assault is to separate God's message from human attempts to put it on paper or parchment in human words. To emphasize the point, Fisher asserted that the Patriarchs knew the Word of God though there was no Scripture in their times. And he jumped from this to claiming the American Indians could have known the Word of God without ever having seen a Bible. Fisher offered a wonderful universalism which emerged beyond the confines of the human attempt to encapsulate God's Word in books and scrolls. As Fisher asked, how can you tell it's God's Word on the page unless you know the Word of God independently?

I think a careful study of Fisher's and Spinoza's Biblical criticism leads to the view that it is probably a joint creation, born out of their meeting over a period of six months or more in Amsterdam. Spinoza's own formulation echoes a fundamental theme in Fisher. Spinoza proclaimed, "They that look upon the Bible, however it be, as a Letter from Heaven by God to Man, will certainly claim and say, I am guilty of the sin against the Holy Ghost, in maintaining that the Word of God is faulty, maimed, adulterated and contradictory to itself: that we have but fragments of it, and that the Original Writing of the Covenant which God made with the Jews perished." All these points Fisher made, and Spinoza and Fisher offered the same examples to prove them.

Fisher claimed that the Light of God by which one discerns God's Message "shined in the heart of man long before the *Scriptures* were ..."—"certain *beams* of old and new are given of God in the conscience of early of them to the sons of men..". The Light was available before there was any Holy Writ, and is available even if one knows nothing of the Bible. He asked, "Is the Light in *America* then any more insignificant to lead its Followers to God than the Light in Europe, Asia, Africa?" For Fisher the answer was a complete universalism—

anyone, any time, any where could find the Light within. This applied to people before Moses, and outside Christendom.

Spinoza's universalism came out of his conviction that the Divine message has come down to us uncorrupted, no matter what has happened to the physical Scripture, the written text, over the centuries. No matter what language the message is in, what words were or are used to express it. "The Divine Law has come down to us uncorrupted [as] an assertion which admits of no dispute. From the Bible itself we learn, without the smallest difficulty or ambiguity, that its cardinal precept is "To love God above all things, and one's neighbor as one's self." The truth of this precept is realized by any rational person any where, any time. For Fisher anyone and everyone can find the Light within and be guided by God, for Spinoza anyone who is rational can find the Divine Moral Law. For neither of them is a church, a creed, a religious tradition needed.

Fisher's universalism seems to have developed out of the implications of the Quaker view of Spirit and Light. Spinoza's appears to have grown out of his superrationalism, that made reason the measure of all things. The universalism of La Peyrère, that everyone could be saved no matter what they believed, or who they were, was still presented within the Judeo-Christian world of ideas. Fisher presented his case as a spiritual Christian. (One of his most forceful statements is in a brief work, *Christ's Light Springing, Arising Up, Shining Forth, and Displaying it self thorow the whole World.*) Spinoza went beyond both Judaism and Christianity. He had been excommunicated from Judaism and refused to become a Christian. He was friendly and involved with those who Kołakowski has called *chrétiens sans église*—Christians outside the churches; Christians without a Church. Spinoza was apparently himself outside the synagogue as well. He may have followed the advice of his supposed predecessor, Uriel da Costa. The latter was a priest in Portugal of Jewish background, who fled to Amsterdam when the Inquisition discovered he was secretly practicing Judaism. Da Costa's Judaism in Portugal was based on his reading of the Old Testament. When he got to Amsterdam, he found the Jews there practicing a quite different religion. He insisted he was right and they were wrong. He wrote a strong statement of his views, which led to his excommunication from the Amsterdam Synagogue. He wandered around Holland and Germany, outside any community. Finally, he begged for re-admission to the Amsterdam synagogue and was accepted after being publicly whipped before the whole congregation, and made to lie down in the doorway of the synagogue while all its members walked over him. As soon as he was readmitted,

he recommenced the argument about his Judaism versus theirs. He urged some recent arrivals from Spain not to join the synagogue. He was expelled again. This time, just before committing suicide, he supposedly wrote his autobiography, in which he said that he did not want to be an ape among apes. He urged everyone not to be a Jew, or a Christian, but to be a man! Da Costa died when Spinoza was a child. Though Spinoza never mentioned him, the German romantics saw Da Costa as Spinoza's actual and spiritual mentor. There is a 19th-century painting of young Spinoza sitting on Da Costa's knee, imbibing his universalism, outside all religious groupings. For Spinoza the churches and synagogues only had a social and political value, to inculcate morality and obedience in those who could not find the universal moral law by reason.

If one road beyond Judaism and Christianity was that that led to universalism, another was spiritualism or mysticism, especially in the form this emerged in the Christian Quietists. Quietism has gotten a fairly bad and limited press, mostly, I believe because it has no base in the established churches. The histories of it, usually quite negative, trace it back to the 16th-century Spanish mysticism of Santa Teresa of Avila and San Juan de la Cruz, who stressed the need to negate one's feelings and desires, and to let God take over one's spirit. The Catholic Church was suspicious of the mystics since it saw that mystical practices could lead to individualistic religious views, and to denial of the need for Church activities. The spiritual force of the early Jesuits, and of the Carmelites of Santa Teresa was so powerful, and so important in providing the vitality, the living religion of Catholicism, that powered the Counter-Reformation, that the Church channeled this mysticism into institutional forms—the Society of Jesus and the Carmelites, rather than suppressing it.

The dangers inherent in this kind of mysticism became apparent in the efforts of two leading spiritual leaders in the mid-17th century, those of Miguel de Molinos and Jean de Labadie. Molinos, born in Spain in 1627, was a minor priest in Valencia. In 1669 he went to Italy where he became a great success as a preacher and spiritual adviser. He became a close friend of the future Pope Innocent XI and lodged in the Vatican. Queen Christina of Sweden, living in Rome as a convert to Catholicism, chose Molinos as her spiritual adviser. He had a tremendous following in Italy. His teachings were hailed by many as a new religion, though he carefully stated his views as being those of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz. His book, *The Spiritual Guide*, was published in 1675, and soon was translated into Italian, French, Latin, German and English. He became the oracle of the time.

Bishop Burnet, who was in Rome then, summed up Molinos's view as "That in our Prayers and other Devotions, the best methods are to retire the mind from all gross Images, and to form an Act of Faith, and thereby to present ourselves before God, and then to sink into a Silence or Cessation of new Acts, and to let God act upon us, and so follow His Conduct." Jesuits quickly saw that Molinos was minimizing or eliminating the role of Church activities, prayer, penitence, and maybe even Communion. Molinos himself refused to hear confession from his followers, since if they were real Quietists, God was directing their activities, not themselves. Hence, they had nothing to confess. One of Molinos's opponents indicated that there would be no need for the Church on Molinos's teachings, and that any moral aberration, including fornication between a priest and a nun, could be excused if the persons were not actors, but had given over control of their activities to God. After ten years of agitation, especially by Jesuits, Molinos was called before the Roman Inquisition, and 20,000 letters to him by followers, mainly female, were seized (including 200 from Queen Christina). He remained in prison (where Christina sent him clean laundry and food), and was condemned in 1687 for having taught and practiced "godless doctrines", and "dangerous and destructive of Christian morality". It was rumored that the letters showed he gave spiritual advice during sexual encounters, that he was a libertine, debauching the finest ladies of Rome. It was rumored that he was not even a Christian, that he was a Jew who had never even been baptized.

Although his condemnation was very public, and he recanted at the same place Galileo had, he was sentenced to life in prison. Even to this day the documentary evidence has not been published, or available for inspection. Sixty-eight theses of his were condemned, and his reputation sullied for the next three centuries.

Recent research indicates that there is no evidence that he was baptized, that he apparently came from a Jewish background, and that when he went to Italy, the only trip he ever made, he went first to the ghetto in Livorno before he went to Rome. His instantaneous success indicates that he must have had some very powerful backing.

His views, which he insisted were those of Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz, indicated both the spiritual force of this kind of scepticism, and the possibility that it would lead beyond and outside of Christianity. H. C. Lea, the famous historian of the Spanish Inquisition, claimed that Spanish mysticism, which only appeared around 1500, was originally just a cover or fig-leaf to allow forcibly converted priests and nuns to carry on their sex life. They were arrested in

flagrante delicto, and offered as a defense that they were illuminated and carried away by God. Lea traced the history of the *alumbrados* from fakery to genuine piety in the course of the 16th century. It became in the teaching of Luis de Leon, Santa Teresa and San Juan de la Cruz, a most forceful personal involvement in religious experience. Its early exponents were mainly from the forced converts in Spain, and may have found it easier to reach God through mysticism than through the Church. The revival of this by Molinos came at a time when mystical movements were battering the established worlds of Protestantism as well as French Catholicism. The emphasis on denying one's desires, motives, reasons, on opening oneself totally to God (while living in the world) made the need for established churches, creeds, and organized activities, questionable.

I do not know if Molinos was a fake, a fraud, a great mystic, a secret subversive agent against the church. His movement and his book, the *Guide*, had a great effect throughout Europe and America. Associated Protestant movements spelled out, in more philosophical terms, the ultimate scepticism involved in Quietism, and the final formulation beyond all creeds and teachings.

The central Protestant figure, Jean de Labadie, has been treated as a misfit, troublemaker and nut. There is a very rare volume, a German history of heretics and fanatics of 1702, which has rogue's gallery pictures of most of the people I am discussing. Labadie's picture is labelled "archfanatic". Only last year has a full, documented study of his life and career and influence appeared.

He was born in 1610 in southwestern France. He studied at the same high school that Montaigne had attended. Then he became a Jesuit. After further study, he left the Jesuits in 1639 and became involved with the Carmelites of Santa Teresa. He took the name St. John of Christ and proclaimed that the Reign of Grace, the Divine Kingdom would begin before 1666. He joined the Jansenists at Port-Royal during their persecution. The Catholic authorities were suspicious of his views and their possible effects. Labadie left Catholicism and became a Calvinist. He preached and taught in Geneva, where he greatly influenced such religious figures as Jacob Spener, the founder of Lutheran pietism. Labadie became a minister in The Netherlands, and is supposed to have preached to 1,000 people in 1666 that the King of the Jews (Sabbatai Zevi) had arrived. The most learned woman of the time, Anna Maria van Schuurman (who knew twenty languages, and who wrote an Ethiopian grammar), joined with him, and helped formulate the very anti-rational, sceptical attack on theology, philosophy and science, that was part of the path to genuine

religion. People's souls should be made bare so that God can act immediately on them. Labadie and Ms. Schuurman fought with the more rationalistic Calvinists in The Netherlands, and finally in 1668, they broke with Calvinism and founded their own sect. They were driven out of tolerant Holland in 1670, so they must have been pretty obnoxious. They moved in with Princess Elisabeth of the Palatine, the niece of Charles I of England. Princess Elisabeth had been a friend and critic of Descartes. She became the abbess of a medieval abbey at Herford, near Munster, in Germany. Princess Elisabeth had taken in various *chrétiens sans église*, like the Quakers, Mennonites, and Socinians, and was happy to have her old friend, Anna Maria van Schuurman and the notorious Labadie as guests also. There is some indication that Labadie went from guest to would-be host, trying to take over the spiritual community. There is a wonderful picture of the hot-house atmosphere of unaffiliated religion given in William Penn's journal of his trip to Holland and Germany. Labadie eventually left and set up a commune at Altona, outside of Hamburg, where he died in 1674.

The Labadie-Van Schuurman view was first an aggressive scepticism against any rational foundations for belief. Reason must be placed on the dung-hill, destroyed, so that God's actions can take over one's soul. In turning against evidence for belief, they also turned against Scripture as a necessary aid to salvation, against any religious laws or ceremonies. They denied the need for any Sabbath observances, and insisted that from the human point of view, all days are equal. They rejected all existing Christian churches as degenerate and irrelevant to the spiritual life, though they saw themselves as ardent, pious Christians. Instead they set up a communist community, where everyone's life was dominated by the immediate action of the Holy Spirit upon them. Two Labadist colonies were set up in the New World, in Surinam and New York, and are probably among the first utopian communist communities in America. (Apparently some sort of communist community existed in 16th-century Guatamala under Bartolomé de Las Casas.)

The quietism of Molinos and of Labadie and Van Schuurman led beyond and maybe outside Christianity. By denying all human bases for finding religious truth, by denying all human rational activities, they turned themselves over solely to Divine influence. They saw churches, observances, scriptures, as unnecessary human ways of trying to bridge the gulf between the human and the divine—unnecessary and even dangerous, since corrupt human beings could misdirect and misuse the situation. As a recent Spanish study of Molinos suggests,

the logic of quietist mysticism eliminates any source of knowledge except direct revelation from God. This can then make Jesus and Mary unnecessary as intermediaries. When one reaches this point, then one is beyond Christianity and outside of it, just pursuing the unrestricted mystical path to opening oneself to God.

A further element in the theology of Labadie and Anna Maria van Schuurman is their relationship to 17th-century Judaism. This has hardly been explored, and I will only mention a couple of points, one of which will lead to the last part of the picture I wish to delineate today. In early 17th-century England, a group of so-called "Judaizers" turned up who insisted on the continuing validity of the Fourth Commandment, and who celebrated the Sabbath in Jewish fashion (or in what they took to be Jewish fashion). As these Judaizers, or Traskites (named after their leader) were persecuted, they became more Jewish, and adopted Jewish dietary practices, and so on. They became so different from their English compatriots, that some of them moved to the Jewish community of Amsterdam, and to Princess Elisabeth's abbey in Herford. Labadie had little sympathy for them because they were substituting one set of human activities for another, and were letting these activities become so important that they interfered with opening oneself to God.

Another Jewish development was quite important to Labadie and Van Schuurman. Labadie as a Catholic had preached that the Millennium, the Thousand Year reign of Christ, would begin by 1666. At the beginning of 1666, the Jews of Amsterdam received news from the Near East announcing that the Messianic Age had begun, and that the long awaited Jewish Messiah had arrived in the person of one Sabbatai Zevi of Smyrna. Sabbatai Zevi himself wrote to the Amsterdam Jewish community telling them of his initial pronouncements for the Messianic Age, and of his appointment of the new kings of the earth. More than 90% of the Jewish world in Asia, Africa and Europe, accepted Sabbatai Zevi as the long awaited messiah. He was greeted with almost total acceptance in Amsterdam and Hamburg, two centers of the Spanish and Portuguese Jews. People made plans to set off for the Holy Land as soon as Sabbatai would call them. The Amsterdam stock exchange (the first in Europe) went crazy, since no one knew whether to buy or sell in the Messianic Age.

Millenarian Christians were also greatly affected. Some accepted Sabbatai Zevi as the Messiah, some as the forerunner of Jesus's return. In a letter by Peter Serrarius, an Amsterdam merchant and divine who was Spinoza's patron, to John Dury, a Scottish Millenarian who had been trying all his long life to re-unite all of the Christian

churches in preparation for the Millennium, one of the first accounts of the reaction in Holland to the news about Sabbatai Zevi appears. Serrarius told Dury that the King of the Jews had arrived, and that Labadie had preached to a thousand people about it. Labadie was apparently very excited by the event. He wrote a now very rare work about what this meant, and concluded that God was rewarding the Jews for their patience and suffering, while showing up the failure of Christians to be ready for their final event. It is my suspicion that part of the reason for Labadie's break with the Calvinists, and his exile from Holland, was that he was an aggressive Sabbatian, seeing Sabbatai's career as an important sign of God's relations to man. Serrarius was a complete Sabbatian. He wrote pamphlets and letters that were distributed in western Europe, especially England, giving all of the news about Sabbatai's career, and Serrarius died just as he was setting out for Jerusalem to meet his Messiah.

As some of you know, Sabbatai Zevi was arrested by the Sultan, and threatened with death. He converted to Islam, and became a minor Ottoman official. Serrarius still accepted the Moslem Sabbatai, and remarked that this showed that God works in marvelous ways. Most Jews rejected Sabbatai after his conversion, though some insisted that it was part of his Messianic mission that he had to take on the sins of mankind by becoming an apostate, and that He would return as a pious Jew. He died in 1676 attending a Yom Kippur service in Montenegro. His followers, who still exist, are awaiting his second coming and the full flowering of the Messianic Age.

The case of Sabbatai Zevi generated a sceptical attack against Judaism. John Evelyn published a work in 1669, *The Three Imposters*, in which Sabbatai was the greatest fraud of them all. And, the case was seen by Christians seeking to convert Jews as evidence that the Jews could not tell a real Messiah from a false one, and hence they should accept the Christian messiah. For the purposes of this paper, one of the most interesting and least studied discussions of the sceptical impact of the Sabbatai Zevi case appeared in a rather amazing work, *Letters Writ by a Turkish Spy at Paris*, covering the period 1637-1682. The author of the first part was one G. P. Marana of Genoa. The remainder, more than six volumes of the work, first appeared in English in the 1690s. It is still not known who the author or authors were. A ninth volume, apparently by Daniel Defoe, carried the story up to 1693. The work is the first of the genre of an outsider criticizing and poking fun at European ideas, values and beliefs. It was the inspiration for Montesquieu's *Persian Letters*, and other such Enlightenment criticisms of the European world. The *Turkish*

Spy was extremely popular. It appeared in French, Dutch, German and Russian, as well as the original Italian and English, and it was republished up to 1801, the 31st edition.

Although the work must have been a great best-seller, it is hardly studied for its content and influence. One of its subjects is the interchange over thirty years between the Spy and the Sultan's agent in Vienna, a Jew, Nathan ben Saddi. Nathan in the story became an ardent follower of Sabbatai Zevi. The Spy kept proclaiming through the work that he was not trying to convert Nathan to Islam, but rather, to reason. "Do not suspect me of Partiality", the Spy said, "or that I am fond of making Proselytes, because I take such Pains to restore thee to *reason*, and make thee sensible thou art a Man". The Spy insisted both he and Nathan needed to get free of their errors and improve themselves. Nathan had gone berserk during the Sabbatai Zevi episode. The Spy railed at him—"How many Messiah's have ye had. Twenty Five at least, besides the Son of Mary ... Must all the World be bothered[?] to Eternity by the Fables of your Nation?"

The Spy argued in his letters to Nathan that Judaism was based on a false history of the world. It is just one more man-made religion, based on corrupted or truncated documents. The so-called oral Law of the Talmud is just a collection of rabbinical opinions with no divine sanction. All the documents, Koran, Bible, Talmud, "were penn'd by Men as liable to Temptations and Errors of all Sorts, as Thou and I". So, one should use one's reason rather than depend on such writings.

After a fairly lengthy attack on the importance of the Talmud, the Spy presented a version of the pre-Adamite theory to show, unlike La Peyrère, that there is nothing special about the history of the Jews. The Spy's brother had travelled to China and India, and had found people there had much different histories of the world, and different scriptures. The Chinese and Indians believe the world to be much older than the Jews do, and believe there were people long before the Biblical Adam. (It is curious that the evidence adduced by the Spy, attributed to his brother, contains a lot of details about Oriental religion and cosmology that were not in the European literature until the late 18th century.) All of this is supposed to show that Judaism is just one religion among many, having no privileged status. Instead of being taken in by its claims to uniqueness and superiority, some one like Nathan should use his reason. The Spy had learned about the rational religion from the Wandering Jew, Ahasuerus, who, we are told, came to Paris in 1644 and talked at length with the Spy. (This is one of the first appearances of the Wandering Jew in European fiction.) Later on the Wandering Jew found the Lost Tribes of Israel,

in the northern parts of Asia, and they were practicing the original and best religion. "They are a nation of philosophers". They have a kind of socialist communal life. They are pacifists and vegetarians. They flourish because of their "exquisite temperance and moderation in all things". They have the rational religion, a pure philosophical Judaism, which would be accepted if we used our reason. We would realize "there is but *One Law*, and *One Thing* necessary to men, that is To Live according to *Reason*. This is engraven in every Man's Heart, and there needs no *Comment* to explain it. Thou art a sufficient *Law-giver, Rabbi, Doctor* and *Interpreter* to Thyself".

In another paper I have suggested that what the Spy was doing was inventing Reformed Judaism out of ideas of La Peyrère and Spinoza (neither of whom is mentioned). This rational reformed Judaism emerged from the Spy's critique of orthodox or normative Judaism. It is again a religion beyond the traditional limits of Judaism, and is an early formulation of the religion of reason, developed from a scepticism about Judaism. It is a mystery to me who the intended audience was. It is unlikely that Orthodox Jews read *The Turkish Spy* in the original or any of its translations. (The Spy claimed the original Mosaic religion was written in Arabic, the Ten Commandments were written by God in Arabic!) The European Christian audience hardly knew enough about Judaism, the Mishna, the Talmud, etc. to get the point. So, it is hard to tell who was being encouraged into Reformed Judaism a century before the view was formulated by followers of Moses Mendelssohn. Nonetheless, in volume 9, attributed to Daniel Defoe, the same argument against Talmudic or Rabbinical Judaism goes on with rational Judaism offered as the best, or better, religion.

If doubts about Messianic Judaism, due to the fiasco over Sabbatai Zevi, led to proposing a religion of reason, doubts about Christian Messianism led to a formulation of a Jewish version of Christianity that became a religion of ethics.

Jewish doubts about Christian Messianic claims go back to the beginnings of Christianity. Christian authorities tried for centuries to get rid of the doubts and the doubters, only too often by force and violence. As a result Jewish doubts were not published. In the late Renaissance it apparently became somewhat safe to write these down, and circulate them. There is a medieval Jewish life of Jesus which began to be known in the European world in Elizabethan times. Christopher Marlowe either had access to the text or to themes in it, and is supposed to have taken material from it for his purported atheist lecture given at Sir Walter Raleigh's home. The work itself was published in the late 17th century in two version by German anti-semitic theologians, to show how nasty the Jews were.

A more impressive case of Jewish doubts about Christianity appears in the *Colloquium Heptaplomeres* of the great French jurist, Jean Bodin. This is a dialogue written around 1580-90 between a Catholic, a Lutheran, a Calvinist, a Jew, a Moslem, and two pagans, about which is the true religion. The shocker in this is that the Jew wins! Bodin did not publish the work. When he died he was denounced as a Jew or as a Judaizer. When the dialogues surfaced, people were sure he must have been Jewish to raise so many problems against Christianity. Bodin's dialogues were not published until 1841, but they became known all over Europe in the period 1650-1700. Bodin's heirs got into a legal fight about who owned the manuscript. When the case came before a judge in Paris, the judge took the manuscript home and had it copied. His friends copied it from his copy. A copy got to England when Henry Oldenburg copied a Paris copy. John Milton apparently got a copy of Oldenburg's copy. Later Milton's copy got to Germany, where it was sent to John Dury. And so, Leibniz and his associates were preparing a copy for publication (which never got published). The work was considered too audacious for publication, but, from the number of known copies, it was studied all over the learned world. And it made known the objections to Christian Messianic claims that can be based on traditional Jewish materials.

A stronger collection of Jewish arguments against Christianity was set forth by members of the Spanish Portuguese Jewish community in Amsterdam. Most of the early members of this group were born and raised in Spain or Portugal as Catholics. Many of them were persecuted by the Inquisition for secretly carrying on Jewish practices. Some of those who escaped, and ended up in Holland, found they were safe, and could argue against their tormentors. An amazing literature, mostly in Spanish and Portuguese was written during the 17th century polemically attacking basic Christian claims. Perhaps the climax of this was the public debate between Isaac Orobio de Castro and Philip van Limborch over the truth of the Christian religion. Orobio typifies the kind of Jewish arguer who emerged in Amsterdam. He had been a royal physician in Spain, and had mastery of scholastic metaphysics. He was imprisoned and tortured for three years because a servant reported he "Judaized", carried on some form of Jewish behavior. After being released, he escaped to France where he became a professor at the medical school of the University of Toulouse. He had to live there as a Christian. Finally he disappeared and surfaced in Amsterdam, where he joined the Jewish community and circumcized himself. He wrote strong philosophical attacks on Jewish backsliders,

Christian apologists, and wrote the only important Jewish answer of the time to Spinoza. His most important work is a lengthy polemic arguing that no matter how it looks, God is on the side of the Jews, has preserved them and will redeem them, and that the Christians are mistaken.

None of the Amsterdam polemics were published at the time, but they circulated in elegant manuscript copies. (Orobio said he sent a copy of his masterpiece to the Jesuits in Brussels who liked it very much.) Only in the late Enlightenment was some of it published, but most of them still remain in manuscripts in libraries all over the world. The principal items are presently being prepared for publication.

The Amsterdam polemics were not rabbinical nit-picking. They were hard-nosed attacks, using the philosophical and theological weapons of the Christian community to raise doubts about the truth of Christianity. They had the effect of justifying the return to Judaism of the persecuted Iberians, and of seriously challenging Christians when they passed into general circulation. The first items appeared in an auction in 1715 in The Hague. As an example, a New England preacher, George Bethune English, found some of these manuscripts in the Harvard theological library in the late 18th century. He studied them, went to New York to consult a rabbi about them, and then wrote an attack on Christianity. He was forced to resign his post, and was seen getting off a boat in Egypt and putting on a fez. He became involved in Ottoman affairs for the rest of his life.

The Jewish anti-Christian polemics were used by French atheists like D'Holbach to attack Christianity. He published an abbreviated version of Orobio's text entitled *Israel vengé*. They also seem to have contributed to the development of a Jewish interpretation of Christianity that would see both Judaism and Christianity as primarily ethical views.

The last figure I shall discuss, perhaps the most bizarre of those I have presented was Johann Peter Speeth, originally a German Catholic, who, after studying with the Jesuits, became a disciple of the Lutheran Pietist Jacob Spener. Then he got involved in the project to translate many Kabbalistic texts into Latin, and was also involved with radical Protestants, Quakers, Mennonites, Anabaptists, and Socinians. He was on the verge of returning to Catholicism, when he realized the Jews were right. He then moved to Amsterdam, and became a rabbi of the Spanish-Portuguese community under the name Moses Germanus.

Among his many bizarre views, he contended that in the original gospel story, Jesus was a nice, moral rabbi of the first century,

who, like other pious Jews, was expecting the Messiah. A couple of centuries later, the story got corrupted, and Jesus was presented as the Messiah he was expecting. The moral message of Jesus was all-important, and as a leading rabbi from Jerusalem of the time, Nathan Shapira, had said to some Amsterdam Protestants, the Sermon on the Mount was the teaching of our finest rabbis.

Moses Germanus offered a Jewish rendition of Christianity in a benevolent form, rather than the hostile one of the Jewish life of Jesus, or the Amsterdam polemics. (He coupled it with a new Messianic movement centered around a Danish merchant who had a Jewish grandfather and claimed to be a descendant of Abraham.) Moses Germanus was known to leading German Christians, including Leibniz. His Jewish version of Christianity was passed on to the 18th-century German Bible critics, who advanced the then radical claim that Jesus was an important, perhaps all important, moral teacher, but not a divine figure. This moral rendition of Christianity, like the Turkish Spy's rational rendition of Judaism, presented another form of religion beyond Judaism and Christianity, a form of what I shall call religious humanism.

It is a commonplace view of irreligious or anti-religious Enlightenment folk that mankind has gone from superstition and magic, to religion, to a scientific understanding of the world. What I should like to suggest as the summation of my story that within 17th-century Judaism and Christianity certain developments took place that went beyond traditional formulations, ceremonies, established religious creeds and institutions, and that these presented a universalistic, creedless mysticism and sense of community, and the moral essence of Judaism and Christianity. These forms of religious humanism did not fall victim to the Enlightenment trashing of organized and institutional religion. Rather they provided much of the push for the abolition of slavery, for the utopian experiences in America, and for an enlightened moral order both then and now (in the many human rights and relief agencies).

Much, maybe too much attention is given to the warfare between organized, institutional religion and the new science and philosophy of the 17th century. Galileo and Molinos both recanted in the same place. Galileo became the martyr for the scientific enlightenment; Molinos for the unaffiliated spiritual people (mainly ex-Protestants). The kind of development that the universalism of Samuel Fisher and Spinoza represented, that the unattached communal spiritualism of the quietists, and the rational and moral readings of Judaism and Christianity represented, has generally been ignored. Those who took

these paths preserved some of the vital and essential features of Judaism and Christianity without the institutional framework. They played a significant role in the growth of universal humanitarianism that led to the abolition of slavery, and many of the social means of improving the quality of human life. They did not get into great confrontations with the Enlightenment atheists or the anti-religious Darwinians. Perhaps in studying those who took these paths in the 17th century, we may find both a better understanding of what happened then, and some useful guidance for what we can and should do now.

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